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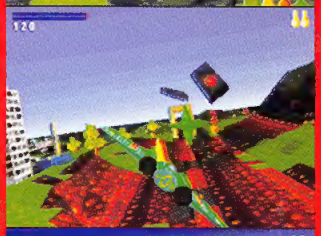

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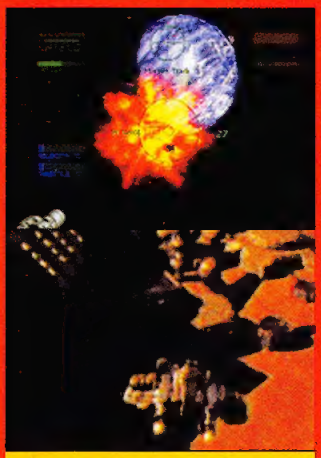

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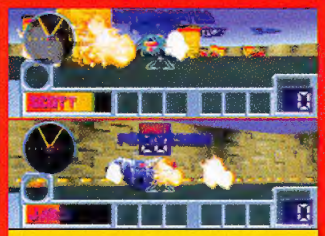

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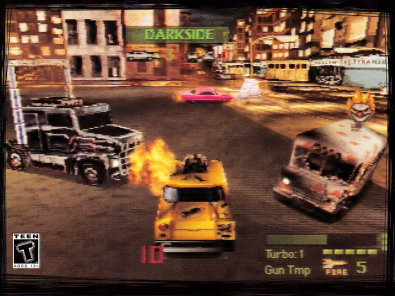

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PlayStation

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Plugged In...

Where do we go from here? It may seem as though the industry is coming on in leaps and bounds. It may look like technology is racing ahead, taking games into the future, but is that actually true? It's just possible that the games industry might have hit a ceiling we previously didn't know existed.

The new 32-bit machines promise all kinds of immersive gaming experiences, yet the game companies are still churning out platform games and shooters and fighting games. They're better-looking, that's for sure, but is **Rayman** really any more of a game than **Mario** or **Sonic**? Of course not. The changes in games at the moment are purely cosmetic. Even so called revolutionary titles, like **Virtua Fighter** or **Jumping Flash**, are simply extensions of existing ideas. Our potential for originality was not, it seems, limited by technology, but rather by the number of workable concepts. There may not be another genre of game as long as we live, simply evolutions of existing game styles.

This is all very pessimistic, of course. The human mind is the most inventive and original on Earth. Sure, Dolphins are smart, but they don't have cars or jeans (the true measure of an intelligent species).

64-bit? Better and faster than 32-bit, but essentially no different. What we need is true immersion. We need to live, breathe, smell and taste experience. That is where the technology is headed. If a completely convincing virtual reality system existed, that ceiling I mentioned would disappear and game designers could once again reach out in a quest for new ideas.

Unfortunately there's a small snag. current display technology makes this an impossible dream. Even the best VR set-up on Earth is completely unconvincing. You can make someone dizzy or nauseous in a virtual reality experience, but you can't make them cold, or afraid, or excited. The images and the sense of immersion are far too primitive.

We already have the computing power to produce super-real images on a computer, but by the time they reach the human eye, that illusion is compromised. We're much too clever for that kind of illusion to work. So what's the solution? Sorry to sound like a **Star Trek** geek, but it probably lies in the field of laser optics and more specifically, holograms. Sticking a helmet on your head is a stop-gap between now and a time when you can go into a game room and lose yourself completely in a new world.

How far away is this kind of experience? Well one thing's for sure, barring miraculous breakthroughs in the manipulation of light, we'll all be very old before a convincing real-time hologram will be able to keep you amused in the privacy of you own home.

It's a shame, but we may live to see it. We may also live to see the social problems (or solutions) that an interactive, convincing, but completely fake fantasy world would bring. Me? Put me down for the first copy of **Cindy Crawford's World O' Sensual Lingerie** for the Nintendo Hyper-Famicom.

Frank O'Connor

INSIDE ULTIMATE

News p008

In an ever changing world of video gaming news, ULTIMATE GAMER is, as ever, on the ball. Strange things are afoot at all the major game companies, as Nintendo reveals yet more Ultra secrets and Sega finally pulls a winner out of the bag. For the inside scoop, read and absorb.

Static p032

Apparently Atari is the hot topic this month with literally hundreds of happy and angry Jaguar owners bombarding our post box with mail. Hate mail, love mail, you name it. However, stress aside, the ULTIMATE staff are here to deal with your problems.

32-Bit Football p018

Sportsmeister Jeff Tschiltsch explores the new realm of 32-bit footballing. As the football season begins, we give you the definitive guide and a revealing interview with Mike Ditka.

The Great Leap Forward p026

Bullfrog, the most original game developer of our time opens its doors to ULTIMATE GAMER and lets you see what it has in store for 1996. PlayStation, Saturn and PC wonders.

Saturn Rising p058

Sega has pulled a rabbit out of its magician's hat in the shape of **Virtua Fighter 2**. The recent Gamer's Day exposé reveals a new look for the company and a new lease of life for the Saturn. Now, PlayStation and Saturn are competing on equal footing. Mind you, after you read this feature, you may think another leader has emerged....

Everything else!

Competitions, retro-gaming, features, news stories, the best previews in the business. It's all here in the fabulous furry fourth issue of ULTIMATE GAMER, the only magazine a gamer ever needs.

Reviews

Games are getting outrageously expensive. You can rely on sappy, candy-coated game mags for guidance, or you can turn to us for real answers. ULTIMATE GAMER pulls no punches. If a game is great, we'll fill you in. If it sucks rocks, then we'll be sure to tell you that, too. This month is kind of a mixed bag, but let's dig right in, shall we?

Wipeout p062
Psygnosis knows how to deliver next-gen visuals, that's for sure!

PGA Tour Golf '96 p064
One of the best golf sims we've ever seen.

Street Fighter: The Movie p065
Is the game better than the motion picture? See for yourself...

Destruction Derby p066
Crash-'em-up action the likes of which you've never seen before.

Philosoma p068
Another straight shooter comes to the PlayStation.

Power Pro Baseball p070
Funny little fatheads provide plenty of laughs on the diamond.

Gundam p071
PlayStation's premiere 3-D, first-person-perspective 'Mech game.

Clockwork Knight 2 p072
Are the graphic enhancements enough to save this sequel?

Extreme Sports p074
Two-player, split-screen excitement in the same vein as **Road Rash**.

NHL All Star Hockey p076
Does Sega's much-awaited 32-bit hockey game deliver the goods?

Last Gladiator p078
The realism of this pinball sim is truly astonishing!

Fantastic Pinball p079
One of the wackiest, weirdest pinball games of all time

Battle Monsters p080
Oooh, we're scared! **Way of the Warrior** meets **Primal Rage**.

Dark Legend p081
Saturn owners wanting Neo•Geo fighting action, take note!

Lemmings 3D p083
Is this game's complexity for better or for worse?

Novastorm p084
Knock, knock. Who's there? FMV. Go away, please.

Mortal Kombat 2 p086
Saturn freaks rejoice! All that's missing is the coin-slot.

Power Serve p088
Tekken-style tennis players on a three-dimensional court.

Total Eclipse p090
Is it really that much of an improvement over the 3DO version?

Discworld p091
This adventure game provides a nice break from killing things.

MICRO REVIEWS p092
Everything else, plus a couple of gems that came in too late for full review.

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INCOMING

M2 advances towards completion, but not much sign of recognizable game titles. Nintendo messes around with timing. Philips goes online. Gambling is legal(-ish)!

M2 MARCHES ON

Back in May, 3DO started the first part of what it has termed a "Three-Phase" launch cycle which will hopefully lead to a Christmas release for its 64-bit M2 upgrade. Phase One was those M2 demos shown at the E³ show (you know the ones). Phase Two (now ongoing) is mainly about getting the development systems out and should result in an official list of licenses soon. In Phase Three, 3DO will actually start showing off real software and a list of initial titles.

Of course there's plenty of speculation as to whether or not 3DO can get the M2 out in time for holiday shoppers and how much software can be finished by then. Considering that 3DO doesn't want (or need) another disastrous, anticlimactic launch, Killer Apps will be a necessity for survival this time around—especially with the great whites swimming hot on 3DO's heels.

Though still unofficial, support is already coming from many of 3DO's old standards. Apart from the obvious, like Panasonic and Studio 3DO, look to Crystal Dynamics, Virgin, Electronic Arts, JVC, Goldstar and American Laser Games, among others, for M2's softs. Most exciting of all, however, is Williams, who, it seems, will be jumping aboard the M2 bandwagon, thanks to Panasonic's recent alliance with them. With Williams aboard and taking an active interest, 3DO-only arcade games may finally be a reality.

Currently, very little is known about specific titles. Panasonic will be releasing an M2 sequel to its horror adventure, **D**, later next year which will be done by the same Japanese company as did the soon-to-be-released original. Another M2 title, **Eye Spy**, is from one of 3DO's smaller developers. The game involves creating new insects from the genetic material up, letting them loose in a biosphere environment and seeing how they survive. Cerebre, the developer, promises a game unlike any other and one that should combine elements from various gaming styles (possibly including fighting and first-person exploration). It sounds weird, and originality is something rarely seen, so this could be a welcome title.

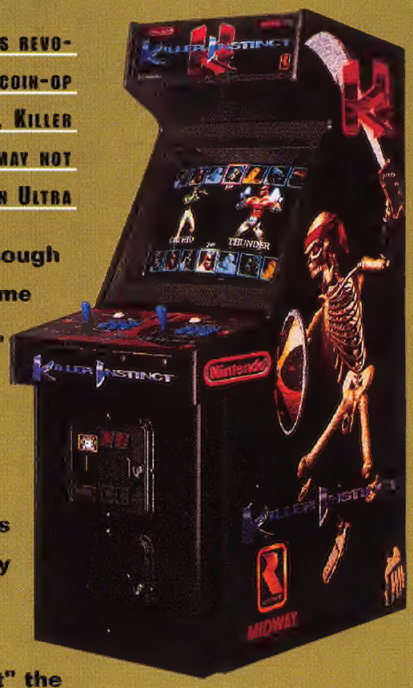
As of now and probably until the Ultra 64, the M2 is the ultimate polygon-pumping monster. M2 can heave a massive amount of fully textured polygons—somewhere between 750,000 and 1 million—so a 3DO polygon fighter would seem inevitable. "Anything you can do, I do better" seems to be the philosophy behind the M2's

design and it seems to have the silicon to back it claims of seven to ten times more power than anyone. Compared to the competition, it's faster, has more memory, can manipulate more objects and create more unreal graphic affects than either Saturn or Playstation. Sitting on top of the old 3DO board, M2 supplies a customized Pentium-killing Power PC 602 chip and ten custom coprocessors that, according to specs, do everything but wash your windows. Talk to developers and the official word on M2's power is,"incredible."

The M2 is 3DO's big (and probably last) chance to regain control and market share, so the hardware has to be impressive. And it is. Software support looks very good and is rapidly expanding too. 3DO can finally start getting the big name games, and M2 could definitely be a big winner in the new year.

CDi GOES ONLINE

Philips has just announced the launch of a modem and connectivity software for its aging CDi platform. This will allow CDi owners, who hardly have the best catalog of software, to enhance their gaming and educational software by tapping into a wide range of software and services. Although there's no CDi applications presently sited on the Internet, there will be by the time the modem launches later this year. The machine will be launched in the UK first, followed by Europe and finally the US.



NINTENDO'S REVOLUTIONARY COIN-OP PROJECT, KILLER INSTINCT, MAY NOT APPEAR ON ULTRA

SNES OWNERS HAPPY, ULTRA OWNERS SAD

OK, so there are no Ultra 64 owners yet, but if there were, they'd be very unhappy. Nintendo is doing two things which may make prospective Ultra owners a little miffed. One: **Killer Instinct** will appear on Super Nintendo (as you already know). Two: **Cruis'n USA** will appear on the Ultra 64 in a heavily modified form.

Nintendo says the Ultra version will be better, but they had made an awfully big fuss about how "arcade-perfect" the titles were going to be. But the really annoying news is that the ultra 64 will probably never even see a real conversion of Killer Instinct, but rather an enhanced version, or more probably, a sequel. OK, so it isn't really bad news, but it is a breach of promise and it is annoying.

GAMBLING ON THE NET

Do you live in a state where gambling is illegal? Most of us do, but a new development in interactive gambling could change that. A company called Lone Star Casino Corp. is presently setting up an online gambling system on Tinian Island, part of the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Obviously there are still legal problems with logging on from non-gambling states, but full betting facilities will certainly be made available to computer users in the Far East and some parts of Europe.

SATURN STARS

You may already know this by now, but if you bought a Sega Saturn between September 2nd and September 30th, you would have received a free copy of both **Clockwork Knight** and **Worldwide Soccer**. This is Sega's last-ditch attempt to draw attention away from the launch of PlayStation. A great little bundle deal, no doubt about it, but it's a shame the offer was so short-lived.

NINTENDO EDGES

Nintendo's long-awaited Ultra 64 console is nearing the light of day. In recent weeks, a number of details have either leaked or been released from Nintendo. Perhaps the most exciting news is a near-definite launch date, at least for Japan. Ultra 64 is due to hit Tokyo stores early in February '96.

Previously it was thought that the machine would debut in December, but our Japanese sources tell us the launch has been delayed because of a piece of Super NES software. **Dragon Quest 6** is the offending Super Famicom game, a game so important it has been pushed ahead of the Ultra 64 in terms of Nintendo's order of precedence.

"This is one promise that Nintendo has no choice but keep"

The news of the delay was soon followed up by more details on the supposedly revolutionary controller. Although no one will see the device until the Shoshinkai show later this year, it has been described. In appearance, the joypad will share some of the features seen on the Virtual Boy controllers, perhaps the pistol-grip handles. That however, is where the similarities end. The Ultra Famicom joypad will have an extra control device attached, in this case a small analog device. This is believed to be a small, concave, rubber button into which the user inserts his or her thumb.

Analog differs from standard control protocol, in that it allows the user to apply various degrees of control. PC flightsticks use this kind of system, allowing the player to turn hard or soft, or move faster simply by applying faster, stronger pressure to the device. The whole point of the Nintendo system is to allow the user greater and easier freedom of movement in a 3-D environment.

For example, if you were playing **Ultra Doom**, the controller would theoretically allow you to move wherever you wanted using the normal joypad, but also allow you to look around you with the analog device. In gaming terms, this would mean you could run forward, but turn your "head" and blast pursuing foes.

Nintendo is putting a great deal of emphasis on this controller, in an attempt to set the abilities of the Ultra 64 apart from the impressive nature of the competition. The machine is being directly billed as a 3-D gaming experience. There will be side-scrollers and conventional shooters for the machine, but 3-D is definitely the key aspect.

The Ultra 64 still has no official title in Japan, but is being referred to as the "Ultra Famicom." The NES and Super NES are respectively called Famicom and Super Famicom in Japan, so this would seem like a logical name choice. One other interesting thing about the Japanese machine is that it may come in one or several different colors. It has been suggested that Nintendo may offer a choice of three different colored machines: red, gray or blue. That approach proved popular when the company offered a similar choice of Game Boys.

Killer Instinct 2 is more likely to appear on Ultra 64.

SNES owners can also celebrate the launch of **Killer Instinct**.

At present, the Japanese market for new game systems is split pretty much evenly between Saturn and PlayStation. The Sony machine's lower price has given it a big advantage, but the forthcoming release of **Virtua Fighter 2**

ULTRA NEARER

may swing the balance back in Sega's favor. The Ultra 64 will have to face a lot of competition when it launches but Japanese insiders are convinced it will take the market with relative ease, thanks to the simultaneous release of a 64-bit **Final Fantasy** game on Day One. The Final Fantasy series has been an unprecedented success in Japan since the first game was released on the 8-bit Famicom and it's difficult to convey to an American audience just how important a title it is. It will literally ensure the success of the machine.

In America however, the success of the Ultra 64 will depend on other titles. RPGs simply don't carry the kind of weight here as they do in the Land of the Rising Sun. The Ultra 64 is due to be launched with a catalog of well-known titles, but these are closely guarded secrets at the moment. What we do know is that the original plan to ship the machine with **Killer Instinct** has been altered. A version of Killer Instinct will launch with the Ultra 64, but will be massively enhanced for play on the Ultra 64. Rumor has it that the machine will actually launch with the as yet unseen Killer Instinct 2. Again, rumors and speculation on the Ultra 64 are rife, so placing credence in leaked facts is not as safe a bet as it used to be.

Good news for **Cruis'n USA** fans is that an Ultra 64 version will also be available early next year, but with an improved frame rate and generally better graphics. Nintendo's early claims that both these games were based on Ultra 64 hardware are utterly false. Both games were designed to run on hardware with little or nothing in common with the new machine. If you remember, Nintendo also promised that Killer Instinct would only ever be available on the Ultra 64, and now the Super Nintendo has its own version.

Shigeru Miyamoto is being proudly hailed as the father of 64-bit gaming and is currently involved in at least four projects, moving from the US to Nintendo's Kyoto headquarters as the projects require. One of the most exciting projects that Mr. Miyamoto is working on is a flying game being programmed by Paradigm Simulations here in the US. It's widely believed that this will be an Ultra 64 version of **Pilotwings**, a game Mr. Miyamoto has widely expressed an interest in doing. 64-bit **Mario** and **Zelda** titles are also in the works, but no announcements about release timing or completion status are available.

So, Ultra 64 is late, no-one has seen any of the games yet and still the feeling in the industry is that this is the platform to beat. Nintendo is putting a lot of faith in the patience of gamers. Sure it'll be a great system, but it's a year late and many potential customers will already have a Saturn or a PlayStation by the time it comes out. There isn't a bookie in the world who'd take odds on this one.

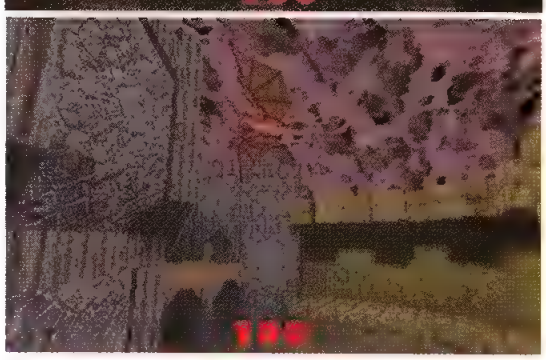
Improvements will be made to utilize the 64-bit architecture.

A QUAKE

Three-dimensional, first-person games have become extremely popular during the past couple of years. One of the pioneers responsible for perfecting the genre is Id Software, the company which introduced incredible little gems like Wolfenstein 3D and Doom. But with the exception of Doom and/or Doom II conversions for everything from the Mac to the Super NES, the company has been relatively quiet.

Enter **Quake**. It has been reported that on an evolutionary scale, Quake is to Doom what Doom was to Wolfenstein 3D. Player interaction factors into this equation. The game is utilizing a totally new graphics engine. By all indications, this new engine is capable of creating real-world environments the likes of which have never been seen before in a computer or video game. This time around, players will be able to fully interact with their surroundings. For example, crates could be stacked onto one another enabling the player to reach otherwise unreachable areas. A player also might wish to experiment with combinations of weapons such as explosives for the purpose of blasting a locked door open. Word has it that "strafing" effects will be in place as well. Blasting the sides of walls results in specific real-world damage which the computer can then map into the program and display later in the game when players pass the area where the destruction took place.

"Instead of just flipping switches, there will be more complicated puzzles to solve."

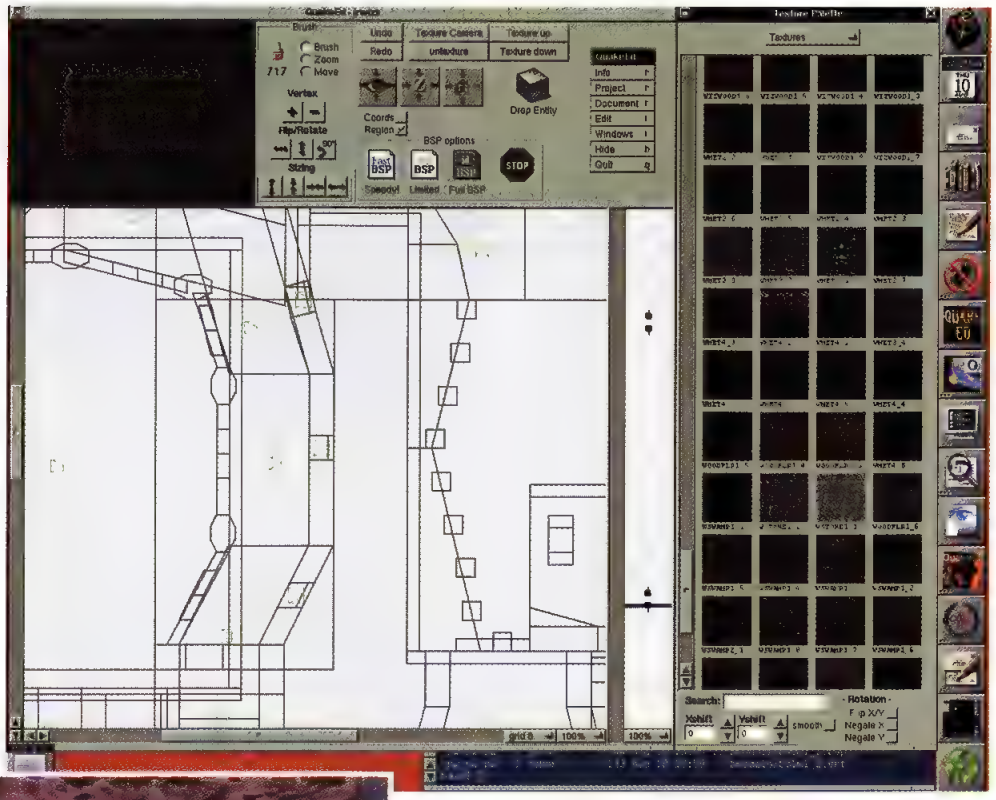


The surreal world of **Quake** is being touted as the next logical step in first-person action/adventure games.

Ultimate Gamer recently caught up with American McGee (real name, swear to god), one of Quake's designers at Id: "The game has a medieval theme to it. Some of the enemies are sword-fighting creatures which tie into the whole look and feel of the game," American told us. When asked about the nature of Quake's gameplay mechanics, and whether or not it was being categorized as a 3-D fighting game, he replied, "Originally, that's what we were focusing on, but in three-dimensional space, a fighter could theoretically play hit-and-run with an opponent. That sort of approach is extremely difficult to pull off properly." So the big question remains: Will Quake simply be an extension of Doom or a bare-fisted 3-D fighting game?

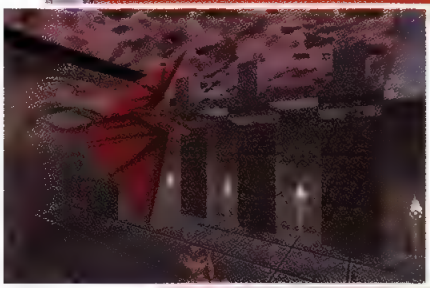
IS COMING

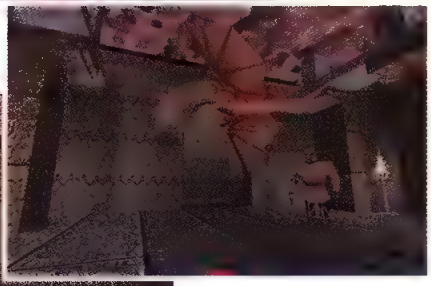
This level design screen (right) gives **Quake** designers the essential tools for level construction. Walls can be erected and textures can be applied.



"Yes, there will be weapons. The emphasis at this point is still killing things, but we're looking to splice in more of an adventure element. Instead of just flipping switches, there will be more complicated puzzles for the player to solve. The levels in Quake will be small or medium-sized in comparison to the Doom games. We found that most people have more fun when the levels aren't so massive that they complicate things."

Like Doom, Quake will initially be released as Shareware for the PC. When asked about its projected release date, we were told, "When the game is finished, it will be released." That's a novel approach. In any case, judging by Id's incredible track record (two for two), the final product should be a resounding success. We can't wait.





This flying dragon (above) reminded us of the terror we experienced in Virtuality's **Dactyl Nightmare**.

"Yes, there will be weapons. The emphasis at this point is still killing things..."

NOMAD PREPARES TO SEARCH FOR GAMERS

It was inevitable. Sega has compacted its 16-bit Genesis game system down into roughly the size of a ham sandwich. Nomad is now finished and will be test-marketed in key locations around the country beginning October 1995. If everything goes as planned, Sega will expand its distribution of the portable game unit to stores everywhere by Spring of 1996.

NOMAD TECH SPECS

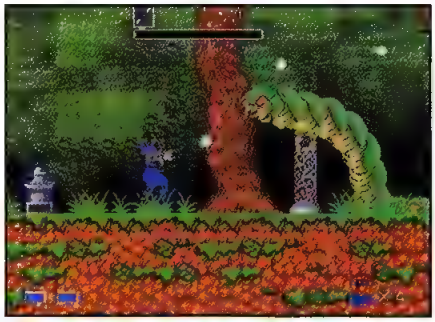
- 16-bit 68000 processor
- Yamaha 8-bit sound chip
- 64 on-screen colors from a palette of 512
- 3 1/4" Active Matrix color LCD screen
- Video and Audio outputs
- Operates on six AA batteries or AC adapter

Nomad incorporates a 3 1/4" full-color Active Matrix LCD screen and Sega's now-standard six-button control pad configuration. There is a switch on the unit to disable six-button mode for some of the older Genesis titles, such as **Forgotten Worlds**. And although there's no link-up facility, a second controller port is included to accommodate two-player games. Nomad also offers audio and video output jacks which enable games to be played on standard TV's and monitors. Power is supplied by six AA batteries—good for approximately three hours of on-the-go play. An AC adapter is available as well.

While it's certainly a great product, there are some things which just can't be done with the Nomad. The 32X will not be compatible (short of making some scary modifications to the thing) nor will the Sega CD. Master System players note that the SMS Power Base Converter will not work with the Nomad either. What Nomad does do is allow gamers access to the more than 600 Genesis-compatible game titles for portable play.

We put Nomad to the test and found it to be a very quality-oriented product. The color LCD screen is a definite step up from the one built into Sega's Game Gear, in that "submarining" (on-screen blurring resulting from graphics advancing at a high rate of speed) has been significantly reduced. Sega's technological improvements have translated into on-screen images which are generally much easier to view. We played **Comix Zone**, **X-Men: Clone Wars** and **Columns** among others, and we're happy to report that all games performed flawlessly.

The unit is set to retail at "under $200"—a bit steep for 16-bit power these days—but then again, what other handheld game system offers this kind of extensive game library? Nomad should have no problem finding a home amongst Genesis fans.



Mystic Defender is one of the many older Genesis titles. It works just fine on the Nomad.

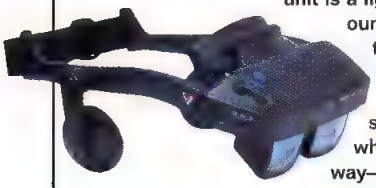
Play **Holyfield's "Real Deal" Boxing** on your flight to the next Tyson fight.

We still remember classics like **Dynamite Duke**.

Yes, Nomad will even play stinky old garbage games like **Sword of Sodan**.

ULTIMATE Stuff

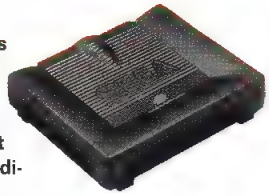
VIRTUAL I-O HEADSET



For the gamer who has everything, a company called Virtual i-O has developed the perfect gift for the holidays. The Virtual i-O video display unit is a lightweight (only eight ounces) strap-on headset that lets the user view video on its twin-LCD screens. This creates a stereoscopic result which—in this case anyway—looks dynamite. The unit is well-suited for playing all types of games but really shines when used in conjunction with first-person perspective titles like **Doom** and **Jumping Flash**. While the product should not be mistaken for delivering true Virtual Reality to non-VR games, it does create an almost all-encompassing vantage point; it reminded us of being in a dark movie theatre. Virtual i-O comes in two models: The standard unit features a stereoscopic color TV and stereo headphones. The second model adds motion-tracking capabilities and a direct PC interface.

$599.95 (non motion-tracking)
$799.95 (motion tracking w/PC interface)
For more info, contact Virtual i-O at 800•646•3759

SEGA SATURN MULTI-PLAYER ADAPTER



Let's face it: Most games are more fun when played against another person. It gets even more intense when you've got three, four, five or even six additional gamers involved in the action. Sega has finally released its much-anticipated Multi-Play Adapter for the Saturn. Sports games are particularly suited for multi-player games and this adapter lets up to six players go at it at once. Now all we need are the games which can utilize this cool feature.

$59.95
For more info, contact Sega at 800•SEE•SATURN

STUNNER LIGHT GUN

Sega recently unveiled its latest Saturn peripheral in the shape of the Stunner light gun. in the past, light guns have ranged from poor to crap, with very little middle ground. We at ULTIMATE GAMER are not ashamed to admit that our cynicism has finally evaporated. The Sega light gun is superb. Fans of arcade **Virtua Cop** will be pleased to learn that the Saturn gun is identical to the arcade weapon. Although it's bright orange, the gun feels completely real, with perfect grip, balance and weight. Better still is the fact that the arcade technology ensures almost perfect accuracy every time you play, with little or no set-up required. The gun will retail at $79.95 with a copy of Virtua Cop included, representing fantastic value. Virtua Cop itself is a superb demonstration of both Saturn hardware and what the gun is capable of. For two-player fun, you may be interested in purchasing a second gun which will set you back a rather hefty $49.95. However, since this represents the best blasting action of all time, you'll want to make the investment anyway.

$79.95 (gun w/Virtua Cop)
$49.95 (gun only)
For more info, contact Sega at 800•SEE•SATURN

PLAYSTATION MEMORY CARDS

The idea of storing and retrieving data on small plastic cards is nothing new; SNK pioneered the idea back in 1990 with its Neo•Geo home arcade system. What's new is the approach that Sony has taken with its PlayStation memory cards. Gamers have the unique ability not only to save and retrieve data such as high scores and character positions in games, but they can also copy that data from one card to another. Let's say your friend has **Ridge Racer**, for example. He has gained access to the black demon car by finishing first in all races. He has that data, along with new track selection data, saved onto his own personal memory card. Your friend can copy the saved data from his card onto one of your cards so that you can gain access to the black car as well. The memory cards work just as well for saving secret characters in games like **Tekken**. The little plastic cards even have places on them for decals to indicate game data stored inside.

$24.95 ea.
For more info, contact Sony at 800•239•SONY

CAT BOX

This peripheral for the Jaguar features loads of little surprises. Not only is the Cat Box built solid as a tank, it gives Jag owners Composite, RGB and S-Video output jacks as well as twin headphone jacks and volume knob. As if all that stuff's not useful enough, the item includes modem and network capabilities for multi-player fun. The link-up feature for games like **Doom** immediately makes the Cat Box go from "nice little accessory" to "must-have-now" status.

$69.95
For more info, contact ICD at 815•968•2228 ext. 222

KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+
PlayStation
PC CD ROM
"It's the most impressive PlayStation game yet"
Next Generation
"A carnage-filled crunch fest" Die Hard Game Fan
"The most realistic crashes we've ever seen"
Game Players
"This is stock car racing on steroids"
Electronic Gaming Monthly
Destruction derby
LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR.
WRECK HIS CAR.
17th November
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32-BIT FOOTBALL

Of all the sports videogame genres, football is the most popular by far. The popularity of a single game, Electronic Arts' **John Madden Football**, was enough to determine Sega's fortunes for years to come in the 16-bit platform war with Nintendo. Indeed, had it not been for that single title, the Saturn might never have come to be.

Now the era of 32-bit gaming is upon us, and not a moment too soon. Clearly, 16-bit football has reached a plateau; the last several incarnations of our favorite games have changed little beyond player names, stats and the mandatory "new feature," such as player creation or trading capabilities. But what can we expect from the forthcoming 32-bit games?

Amazing as it may seem, the first 32-bit video football game is already over a year old—EA's **John Madden** for the 3DO. The game's use of advanced video processors, CD audio and CD-ROM storage showed how superb graphics, detailed animation and digitized video footage could take the "standard" football game to new heights. When you add in the knowledge learned from developing for PC CD-ROM, new tool kits for developing true 3-D environments, and the special hardware features of the new consoles, including specialized graphic chip sets and multi-function controllers, you realize the possibilities are amazing. As you'll see in the following previews of upcoming titles from Digital Pictures, Electronic Arts and Sega, 32-bit football is about to arrive in style.

Quarterback Attack

What's the most exciting part about playing football video games? Being the quarterback and directing the offense, of course! While most football games up to this point have you start offensive plays as the quarterback, you invariably end up being the running back or receiver once the ball is handed off or passed. Digital Pictures decided to take a different approach when creating its first 32-bit football game, as DP President and Executive Producer Tom Zito explains:

"As we talked with consumers and focus groups, what they'd tell us all the time was that they really wanted to be the quarterback, saying, 'I know you really can't do that, but wouldn't it be cool?' So we started thinking, 'How do we do it, how do we do it?' And what ended up happening was that the technology got better and our understanding of how to use the technology got better too. We were finally able to figure out how to deliver to a person the sensation of what is it like to be a real quarterback, to be down there on the line of scrimmage and have huge guys who want to kill you just waiting for you to snap the ball so they can come stomp on you."

The result is **Quarterback Attack**, a first-person point-of-view quarterback simulator. As the team's rookie, you are suddenly thrust into the big game when the star quarterback goes out with an injury. The game features DP's trademark full-motion video, all shot from the QB's "in the helmet" perspective. The photo-realistic graphics make you feel like you're actually on the gridiron like no other game has done before.

To help you through your big-league debut is your coach on the sidelines, Mike Ditka. If you follow his advice and execute his tactical suggestions correctly, you and the team will fare well. Screw up, however, and this coach is going to let you know it! Ditka also delivers half-time speeches that are customized based on the team's performance in the first two quarters of the game.

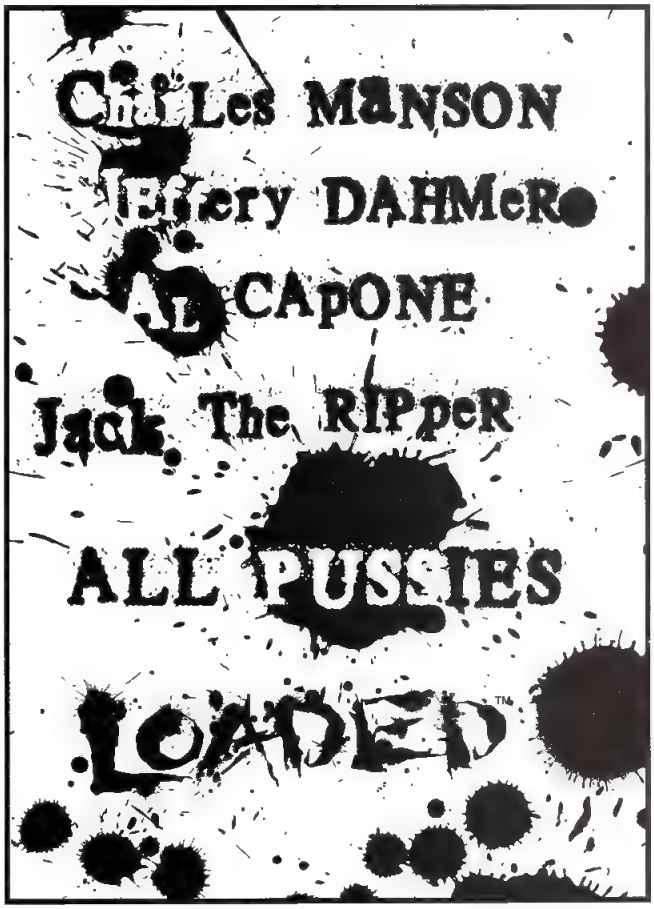
Forget whatever misconceptions you have about FMV games and interactivity; this isn't a "pick the play, see the outcome" game like **NFL's Greatest** on the Sega CD or **Live Action Football** for the PC. **Quarterback Attack** features all the game play you would expect from a "traditional" video football game. The game could have been developed using the standard method of creating computer-generated graphics, but DP chose to stick with digitized video to give the gamer the most realistic experience possible.

By removing the typical "windows of opportunity" that drive the play process in most FMV games, the programmers have given the player complete control of the quarterback at all times. Once the ball is snapped, you'll have a limited amount of time to check off your receivers before the pocket begins to collapse. A passing crosshair is used to aim your pass; if you don't lead your receiver, you'll end up throwing the ball behind him, or worse, be intercepted. You can throw the ball away by aiming the cursor for the sidelines if there's nowhere to go. If you stand still too long, you'll soon see a gigantic lineman filling your face mask. The controls allow you to avoid the sack and buy some time, but if your receivers fail to get open, you always have the option of scrambling for the first down marker.

Quarterback Attack could be described as a simulation of Football rather than a pure arcade experience.

There's a lot to do in those frantic moments after the ball is snapped, but novice players have several options at their disposal until they get up to game speed. Target boxes can be turned on to show you where a pass needs to be thrown in order for the receiver to have a chance to make the catch, and the variable speed setting lets you slow down the action until you're comfortable with the controls. Other options include changing the defense's level of intelligence and adjusting the level of passing accuracy required to make a completion.

Two NFL coaches contributed to **Quarterback Attack**'s extensive playbook. Selecting a play is a two-step process. First you select the routes your receivers will run, then those of the backfield. The two selections are then combined together, and a window shows the layout of the entire play. One of the major keys to success in this game is learning to read the defense when you come to the line of



Multiple viewpoints are the order the day, a feature being seen in more and more football games thanks to 32-bit technology.

scrimmage. If you see something in the defense you don't like, which is based on your play selection, you have the option of calling an audible to stay out of trouble or exploit a weakness.

Because this is a quarterback simulator, there is no defensive control to speak of. If you lose possession of the ball, either through a turnover or punt, you'll see a "highlight" clip depicting what the other team's offense was able to do against your defense. You'll either get the ball back at a certain point on the field or see the other team score. Unlike other Digital Picture sports games, **Quarterback Attack** does include a two-player mode, although play is not simultaneous. The first quarterback takes control of his offense, while Player 2 cheers on his defense. When a change in possession occurs, Player 2 takes the field as the opposing team's quarterback and tries to score against Player 1's defense.

Watching your opponent play while waiting for your team to get the ball back isn't a bore, thanks to the excellent production values of the video footage. During the two-week shooting schedule, over 900 plays were filmed, ensuring variety that will keep the game fresh (not always an easy thing to do in a FMV game). The action is hard-hitting and as realistic-looking as anything you've ever seen on TV. "The guys we used to shoot the game had a lot of experience shooting football," explained Zito. The athletes played so hard that there were 15 injuries during the shoot. "The first day I was there [at the shoot] I was worried," said Zito, "because I thought these guys were just going to kill each other. But the doctor told me that if in fact we did tell them to run at half-speed or hit half as hard, they'd hurt themselves even worse. They're football players, and that's what they do."

Of all the aspects of the game, Zito is probably most proud of the sound. "The sound is almost better than the pictures," Zito claims. "You feel like you're in a stadium with 65,000 people. No one will have ever heard a game that sounds like this one; when you're tackled, you can feel yourself going down and hear the bones being broken. The sound design was done by guys who've done the sound for many of the football movies. We actually break two-by-fours for some of the sounds of the hits."

Being a rookie quarterback, you're susceptible to a lot of criticism, so of course some of it's good, some of it's bad.

It wouldn't be football without statistics and replays, and **Quarterback Attack** has both. The game tracks extensive quarterback statistics and calculates your QB Rating just like the NFL. Compare your own QB Rating to your favorite NFL stars or use the rating, rather than the score, to determine the winner in two-player mode. Replays can be viewed in either normal speed or slow motion, great for viewing that spectacular catch or mind-numbing sack.

By taking advantage of the latest 32-bit horsepower, Digital Pictures is building on the interactivity pioneered in **Prize Fighter** to create a new generation of photo-realistic sports games. Based on what we've seen of the work in progress, **Quarterback Attack** goes a long way in fulfilling every armchair quarterback's fantasy!

I had a chance to chat with Bears legend Mike Ditka shortly after the shooting of the footage for QUARTERBACK ATTACK was complete. Candid as ever, the coach commented on the making of the game as well as the Raiders, baseball and the state of the NFL in general.

UG: Coach, let's talk a bit first about how you got hooked up with Digital Pictures to do **Quarterback Attack**.

MD: They gave me a call; they already had in mind pretty much what they wanted for the guy who was gonna interact with the player who's playing the game as the quarterback. They knew which coach they wanted and came to me. I looked at what they wanted to do, did the deal, and we shot it. I was really satisfied with what we did in the shooting; it was very realistic in the lingo and the conversation. It's different because the person playing the game will interact with me as the coach. On the good plays he'll be complimented; on the bad ones he'll be bawled out a little bit.

UG: Did you reach back to your past experiences as a coach on the sidelines, or was it scripted out with the director?

MD: I didn't have to reach, I remember it very well; both the good ones and the bad ones. I'm sure a lot of other people do too. I think it was just a matter of being myself, which is nothing I lose any sleep over.

UG: What about the game's strategy, play calling, realism and so on?

MD: I didn't really get into the technical end, but there's enough strategy. It's not NFL players [that were filmed], but the players we used were ex-college players and some ex-NFL players. The strategy isn't much different than most of the other games that are out there. The big difference is in the interaction between the quarterback and the coach.

UG: Where did the shoot take place?

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE DITKA

MD: Out at El Sorento College in Northern California. When you see the game played, you're gonna be amazed when you look at the stands and see what it all looks like because it's all very, very realistic. They did a heck of a job with that, I think.

UG: Would you say the quarterback in the game, the character that the player plays, was modeled after any quarterbacks that you coached?

MD: No, I don't think he was modeled after any quarterback that I coached (laughs). He's a rookie quarterback. Being a rookie quarterback, you're susceptible to a lot of criticism, so of course some of it's good, some of it's bad. But you're also susceptible to a lot of praise, a lot of coaching. I mean, it's not all negative [in the real game], believe me, and it's not all negative in this either.

UG: Did your broadcasting experience over the last couple of years help you with this game at all?

MD: I think the broadcasting experience makes you more at ease in anything you do. I think the more you're in front of a camera, the more you feel comfortable in front of the camera. But I don't know if it helped that much. I think that my coaching experience probably helped the most.

UG: Do you actually ever play any of these [video football] games?

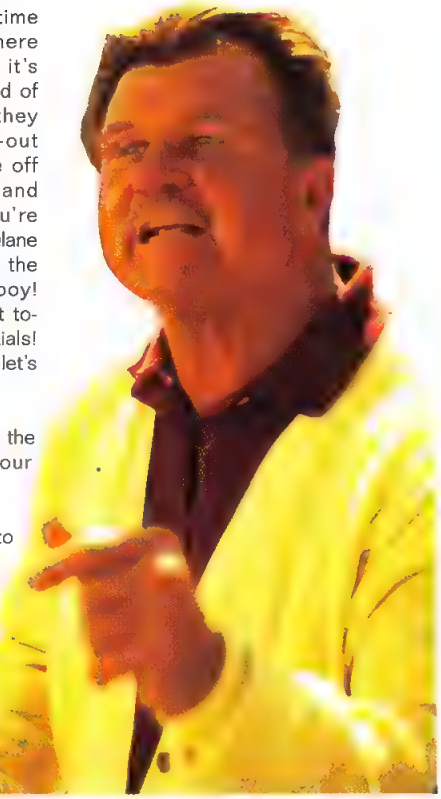
MD: I've played a couple of 'em and they're enjoyable. I mean, it's like in a regular game. There's a lot of human error involved, but there are some things in these games—sometimes you don't understand why the ball bounces the way it does, but it does; but that's the same as in real life. There's not much difference, really.

UG: What do you think **Quarterback Attack**'s appeal will be to people?

MD: I think it will be the personal touch between the player and the coach. The interaction, I think, will be the biggest thing.

UG: What was your favorite scene from the filming?

MD: Oh, we had fun with it. I gave him some hell on some things. You know, with rookies, it's like the first time they're out there they think it's gonna be a bed of roses. Then they go three-and-out and you come off the sideline and say, "Hey, you're not playin' in Tulane now. You're in the big leagues, boy! You gotta get it together; you gotta live up to your credentials! You've got some big clippings on yourself; let's live up to 'em!" You know, stuff like that.

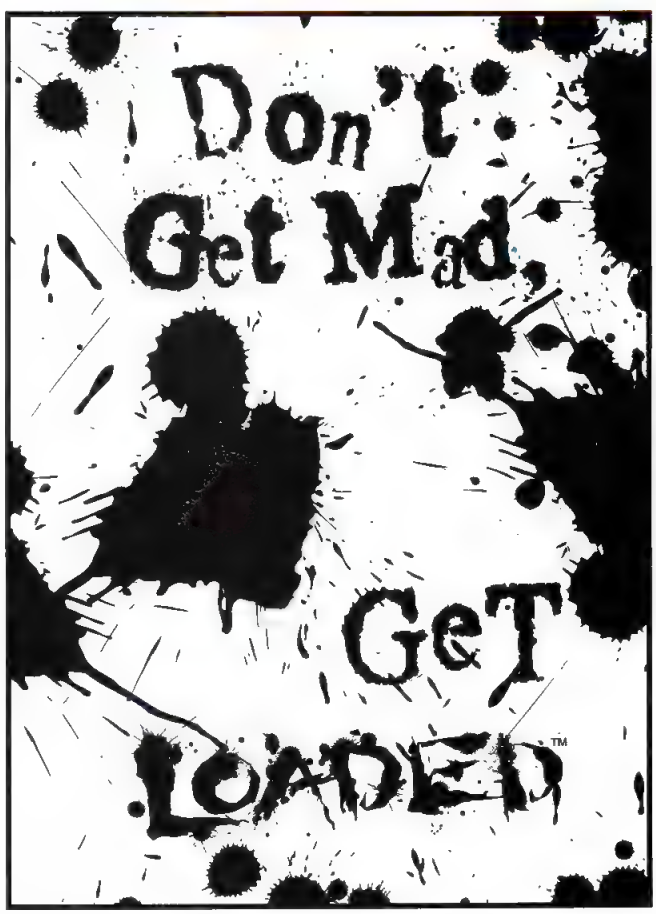


UG: In the pros, who would you say was the best quarterback that responded to your coaching?

MD: I really think they all did. You'd have to talk to them personally, but I think they did. I think most of it was positive; I'm sure there was some of it that was negative. I thought I had a good relationship with McMahon; I thought I had a good relationship with all of 'em. There were things that were said and done over the years that maybe could have been done a little bit different, but overall I think the relationships were good. I know one thing—that I have great respect for those guys and have a great fondness for them. I hope it's mutual.

UG: Would you ever consider getting back into coaching?

MD: If the right situation happened, I would. I've got a good record, I know what it is all about, and I know how to do it, but I'd have to deal with a guy who'd give me the authority to do it. They want to all get involved, and then when the blame comes down, they don't want to take any of the blame, but they want to be involved in everything else, so I wouldn't go for that kind of a deal. But if someone wanted to work hand in hand with me and say, "Hey,



we can get this done together," I'd say, "Hey, lets take a shot at it."

UG: Great; I think the game misses you.

MD:(Laughs.) The game misses some identities, I'll tell you that. They're trying to get everyone to look like a clone out there, and that's stupid.

UG: Back to the broadcasting. Has that changed your perception of the game at all? Have you gotten any different insights that you didn't get on the field?

MD: Well, I think when you sit back and you watch every team play every week, you really see the preparation that other coaches put into the game. Also, I think you have a chance to look at the talent around the league, and I really like that. But you also see some things you don't like in the attitude of certain players. To me, I think there needs to be more discipline in all of sports. I think that players have to understand that they have a tremendous obligation to the public and to give back, because the public is giving them a hell of a living, so they gotta give something back.

UG: I think that last year really helped the NFL as a whole, because it were the one sport that didn't really have the specter of labor disputes hanging over them, and the players really seemed to be out there enjoying the game.

MD: Right. They work hard to get the labor disputes over with, and anything can be settled, but this thing in baseball is a complete joke. You have people on the baseball side negotiating who are not baseball people, they're lawyers. And basically you have people who've never played the game on the other negotiating—they have a lawyer too. You wonder if they have the best interests of the game at heart, and I don't think they do. And that's what pisses you off.

UG: Yeah....

MD: And that's what bothered me about football. I kept saying, "This game is bigger than the people in the game." The game is gonna be here when we're gone, let's face it. We're just passing through; we're gonna take a moment in time and participate in it. Let's give it our best, let's give something to the game, and let's take out of it whatever we can take out of it; but let's give something back to the game. That's what I've felt all along, so it kinda burns me up when I see some of the things I see. The game's the most important thing.

UG: What do you think of the Raiders moving back to Oakland?

MD: Well, hopefully they'll get their old Oakland mystique back. They certainly didn't have it in L.A., and I think it would help them tremendously. I've always felt that Oakland was the city the Raiders belonged to; I called 'em the Oakland Raiders for years after they moved to L.A. It's a shame to see L.A. without a team. That's the tragedy, to me. I think it will only be two years before they put a team in there.

UG: You were at Accolade for a while and now at Digital Pictures. Have you enjoyed making these games? Would you like to keep making them?

MD: If we keep making them is up to the people making the games. If they feel I fit into it, then yes. In the situation with Digital, I think they thought I was a good fit for what they wanted to do, and that's why I was a natural for them.

The game is gonna be here when we're gone, let's face it. We're just passing through.

Taking what they learned from creating the first 32-bit football game, Electronic Arts' goal for Madden '96 (Playstation, PC-CD) is to merge its award-winning playability with all the glitz and glamour of a Fox Network Sunday telecast. After the game-day introduction from the studio and checking in with Leslie Visser on the sidelines, James Brown sends you to the booth where John Madden is joined by his longtime commentary partner, Pat Summerall.

From the sets to the audio, this is as close to interactive television as you can get. For example, authentic Fox broadcast music and screen graphics are used extensively, and as Summerall calls the play-by-play, he uses the actual names of the players. While the 3DO version featured 40 different "Maddenisms," the Playstation version includes nearly 100 audio clips from the coach.

The player graphics and animation exploit the 32-bit platforms to their fullest. Six real NFL players were digitized using state-of-the-art motion capture technology, resulting in over 400 different animation sequences. Thanks to the increase in processor power, the players in the Playstation version are 30% larger than those in the Genesis version, standing nearly 50 pixels tall. The game includes the standard Madden animation we've come to expect, such as end-zone dances and head-butts, along with 12 special 3-D computer-rendered animation sequences that are displayed after spectacular touchdowns or thunderous sacks. Thirty rendered NFL stadiums and multiple camera angles round out the special graphic features.

When it came to the game's interface, the design team took the approach of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," leaving in the tried-and-true features that work, while taking advantage of the new controllers to add more options. Jukes are now an integral part of the game and will be executed via the Left/Right triggers found on the new 32-bit console controllers. Since the

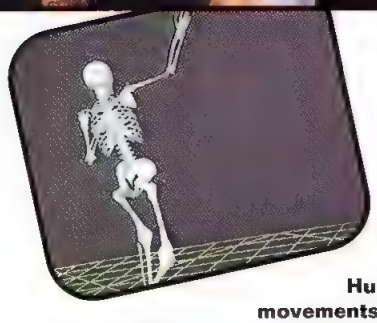
MADDEN '96

PlayStation controller has two sets of L/R triggers, players will be able to execute two different juke moves. No longer will defensive players be able to launch themselves into a flying tackle ten yards away and expect to bring the ball carrier down.

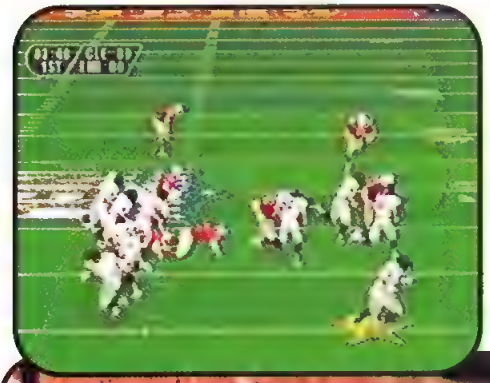
Thanks to its NFLPA license, Madden '96 includes all the current NFL players, including portraits and their statistics. A new agreement with the NFL Hall of Fame allows the inclusion of over 2,000 of the game's greatest players on the teams that made them famous (yup, even the Juice is there). Add in the regular NFL, Pro Bowl, All Madden and Super Bowl teams, and you have over 100 different teams to choose from.

The game options are as extensive as ever. Play modes include Full Season, Playoffs, Super Bowl and Pro Bowl; and full player, team and league statistics are tracked. You can create your own custom tournaments and adjust the penalties to suit your style of play. The playbooks are massive, with over 240 offensive and defensive plays customized for each team. Madden now incorporates the General Manager feature first found in EA's NHL series, which allows you to trade, waive and sign players to your team.

Not just a port of the venerable 16-bit franchise, Madden '96 creates a totally new experience on the 32-bit platforms while retaining the play mechanics that made it one of the most popular football titles of all time. Given the phenomenal success Madden enjoyed on Sega's Genesis, it's surprising to note that the Saturn version of Madden '96 was nowhere to be seen during our preview. EA assures us that the Saturn version is coming and that the delay has more to do with Sega's late shipment of development stations than anything else. Considering Madden made the Genesis what it is today, Sony must certainly consider itself lucky to get this system-selling title first as the 32-bit platform war begins.



Human movements are captured using the latest high-tech motion-sensing equipment.



MADDEN '96 features motion capture, SGI rendered graphics, polygons and every other 32-bit frill you can think of.

PRIME TIME NFL FOOTBALL

For the developers of **Prime Time NFL Football 32X**, size is everything. "I've always wanted a football game with a huge field," says producer Scott Rohde. "In most games you have to fit the majority of the field on the screen. If you want to run an out pattern with one of your receivers, the 'out' part is a step towards the sideline. With our field, you can literally take seven or eight steps towards the sideline, which is really cool."

With a larger field, it stands to reason that the players would have to increase in size as well, but bigger athletes are only part of the story. Using a special scaling routine that takes advantage of the twin SH2 processors, the programmers developed a method of stretching or shrinking the players proportionally, creating a realistic team of athletes that are different sizes. Unlike **NBA Action '95**, which stored three separate "sizes" of players, each with its own set of animation, the graphic engine in **Prime Time 32X** creates an entire team from a "base set" of animation, allowing more animation to be stored in the same amount of memory. Each player's physical statistics are stored in a look-up table, and the software generates the correctly-sized player on the fly. "So Barry Sanders will be 5-8, 190 pounds, Bruce Smith will be 6-4, and you are really going to be able to tell the difference," continues Rohde.

Prime Time NFL is one of the first 32X games that really takes advantage of the multiprocessor capabilities offered by mating the dual Hitachi SH2 chips with the Genesis. The 32X development team piggybacked their work on the programming efforts that have gone into strengthening the Genesis version of the game, which is basically the upgrade to NFL '95. The 32X version uses the same Genesis artificial intelligence engine, running on the 68000 processor, to drive the game, allowing the SH2 chips to be devoted to the graphics engine and sound. The biggest challenge, according to Rohde, was getting processors of vastly different architectures and speeds to communicate with each other.

As Rohde took me through the demo, it was clear that the extra effort required had certainly paid off. The large players look great, are smoothly animated and can be viewed from a number of zooming, floating camera angles.

"We're using 3-D polygon-based players," states assistant producer Gerald DeYoung. "It's sort of Virtua Fighter meets the NFL.

End zone and mid-field logos decorate the giant field, which utilizes a vibrant color pallet.

The lack of quality sound effects has been the gamers' biggest complaint about the 32X as a platform, a situation Rohde intends to rectify with Prime Time. "We've been really working hard on the sound, because that's another thing that this system can do better than the Genesis. I know you haven't seen it so far, which is kind of frustrating. The Genesis only has one digital channel; this game [on the 32X] can have up to four with the driver we are using, so for the tunes, we'll have digital drum loops going at the same time as digital guitars. And during the game, we'll also have a real digital crowd going at the same time the announcer is talking."

With the inclusion of standard Sega Sports features, such as free agent signing, full season schedules, player trades, playoff and Super Bowl modes, all 30 teams and 1,500 real NFL players, complete with a full compliment of statistical tracking, 32X football fans will certainly have reason to cheer when the game is released this fall.

Saturn owners will have to wait a while longer, however, as their version of Prime Time is still at a very early stage and is not expected to be released until Christmas at the earliest. Like the 32X version, it will feature both the NFL and NFLPA licenses, but thanks to the Saturn's CD-ROM, the game will also include NFL film footage in its opening and closing sequences. The footage will also be used in video "scouting reports," showing the player which athletes he'll need to focus on to be successful. The Fleer license allows the inclusion of digitized player trading cards that can be flipped to view statistics.

The graphics engine is completely different from the 32X version of the game. "We're using 3-D polygon-based players," states assistant producer Gerald DeYoung. "It's sort of **Virtua Fighter** meets the NFL. The [animation] process is time-consuming and a little tedious, but when you see it, you'll say 'Wow!'" The use of polygon-based players allows detailed animation from the motion-capture process to be completely integrated into the game, along with unique scaling features. The instant replay includes full scrolling of the field, along with tilting, rotation and zooming capabilities. With a completely new AI engine, in-depth statistical tracking and 30 accurately modeled stadiums, **Prime Time NFL** for the Saturn should prove to be worth the wait.

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THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

by Ron Dulin

Since the debut of **Populous** in 1987—which is among the most influential and best-selling computer games of all time—Bullfrog Productions has remained one of the most innovative and exciting game developers in the world. From **Syndicate** to the more recent **Magic Carpet**, each subsequent Bullfrog release has set the standard for others to follow.

Now Bullfrog is in the midst of its most productive year yet. While primarily a PC developer in the past, it is now developing for the 32-bit systems and porting some of its more recent classics. All together, Bullfrog will be releasing seven brand new games over the next few months (a number which will instantly double their catalog), and numerous 32-bit versions of PC standards.

The following is a look at what's coming up in the next year from Bullfrog, a list extraordinary for its diversity, as well as its attention to both quantity **and** quality.

Theme Park will include some new features on the Saturn an PSX, including the virtual tour shown below.

THEME PARK

A huge world-wide hit in its previous incarnations for the PC, Mac and 3DO, the first of Bullfrog's "designer series" failed to crack the US market. Which is a strange fact, considering it was one of the most enjoyable and original resource management simulations in a genre filled with *SimCity* knock-offs. Hopefully, the upcoming PSX and Saturn versions will help to amend this American oversight.

The premise of *Theme Park* is more light-hearted than its more serious-minded counterparts. Starting with a limited amount of funds and a small plot of land, you must build an amusement park from the rails up. Choose where to put rides, concession stands and midway games, as well as hiring security guards, janitors and entertainers. The rides are cool enough, from bouncy castles to haunted houses to roller-coasters you design yourself, but the best part is that you can actually ride them by way of nicely animated cinematic scenes. And the 32-bit versions have an added bonus: now you will be able to take a virtual stroll around your very own park.

But it's not all fun and games: you also have to deal with greedy employees, disgruntled customers and the constant struggle of keeping your rides working. *Theme Park* allows you to choose the level of realism you want. On easier levels, you simply choose your rides and attractions and make sure they're working properly. On more complex levels, you must deal with every minute detail of running such a grand business. Union negotiations, research, inventory control and demanding shareholders all come into play, and it becomes a constant, unending struggle to keep everyone satisfied.

Then again, you might not even want to try. Some of the most enjoyable aspects of *Theme Park* come about when your park becomes disreputable. Not repairing rides will cause them to eventually explode, and there's nothing quite as satisfying as seeing some little brat literally flying off your "coaster of doom". Low security will allow gangs of thugs to come and scare away your more decent customers, and bad bathroom placement may cause your park to become a bit, er, messy. Let's just say that a misplaced port-a-potty may give your janitors good reason to be disgruntled as they spend most of their time cleaning up regurgitated cotton candy.

***Theme Park* is available now for Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn.**

MAGIC CARPET

One of the best PC games of the last few years, *Magic Carpet* will be headed for the PSX and Saturn early next year. The game has been endlessly compared to *Doom*, an analogy which is based on the fact that both games utilize the ubiquitous "first-person perspective". But beyond that slight similarity—in this writer's humble opinion—there is simply no comparison.

Magic Carpet takes place in a series of worlds which have been destroyed by an ongoing war between powerful wizards. In the fighting over the magical lifeforce, or "mana", which gives the wizards their power, the barren landscapes have been overrun by the creatures which were created during the struggle. As a fledgling apprentice, you must fly—by way of a sophisticated flight engine—into the hostile worlds on the eponymous carpet and bring order to the chaos.

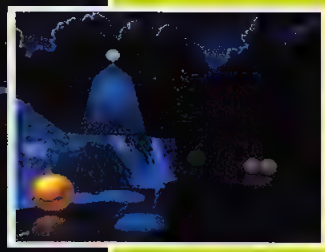
How do you do this? By killing things, of course. The creatures you face are varied, from swarms of killer bees to huge dragon-like Wyyverns. To battle your foes, you have an arsenal of 25 spells at your disposal which range from the reliable "fireball" spell to more efficient means of destruction such as the "lighting storm". When creatures are destroyed they give off the aforementioned mana, which is then collected by hot air balloons and carried back to your castle. The more mana you collect, the more powerful you become. And the more powerful you become, the more havoc you can wreak.

But *Magic Carpet* manages to stay above the mindless kill-fests it has been compared to. The game involves as much strategy as finger-twitching, and the other wizards—with equally powerful spells and a wicked artificial intelligence—add a healthy dose of competition as they try to steal your mana and send you hurtling into the drink.

And what a drink it is. *Magic Carpet*'s graphics are a glory to behold. The island scenery is not only beautiful, it can be altered in real time with spells which allow you to create volcanoes and earthquakes and other natural disasters, causing devastating changes to the landscape before your very eyes. And the game should look even better on the 32-bit systems than it did on the PC, which was near-perfect. Definitely one to watch for.

***Magic Carpet* will be available for Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn sometime in Spring 1996.**

Magic Carpet features some of the most breathtaking graphics ever.



Nocturnal levels give players a taste of the nightlife in the NETHERWORLDS.

MAGIC CARPET II: NETHERWORLDS

Debuting this fall for the PC, *Magic Carpet II* has the look and feel of its predecessor—but with enough new options and changes to make it an entirely new experience.

The most obvious difference with the sequel is the new mission-based gameplay. In the first game, your only goal was to collect enough of the precious mana to move onto the next world. With *MCII*, you'll have a variety of goals in each world. These new goals range from simply flying to a location in the world to destroying an entire race of creatures. The mission-based game-play is illustrated by the single-level demo, in which you must destroy a herd of goats. That's right: goats.

This demo may give first-time carpet-baggers an inaccurately silly view of the game, but not to fear: the new monsters which you'll find in the full version of *MCII* are by no means as mundane. The most frightening of the new horde is the hydra, a huge creature with five regenerating heads, each of which must be destroyed before the beast is defeated. Luckily, you'll have a whole new array of spells at your disposal. From the "gravity well' (which sucks opponents into a vortex, dispensing them as a convenient mana ball) to "fools mana" (false mana which explodes when opponents try to possess it), the new spells are more varied and more powerful than in the original. Plus there is a new spell system, which makes the spells gain potency as you prove your proficiency.

In addition to changes in game play, the flight engine and graphics have been noticeably improved. No longer will your flying be confined to the daylight. There are nocturnal levels which demonstrate Bullfrog's real-time light-sourcing beautifully, as well as underground levels in the lava-laden "netherworlds" of the title. All in all, *MCII* should prove to be a worthy successor to the original.

***Magic Carpet II: Netherworlds* is available now for IBM PC, with other formats TBA.**

HI-OCTANE

In an unusual move, Bullfrog has turned its talents to a more well-established genre with *Hi-Octane*. A futuristic racing-shooter in the classic tradition, *Hi-Octane* has the distinct advantage of an enhanced *Magic Carpet* engine.

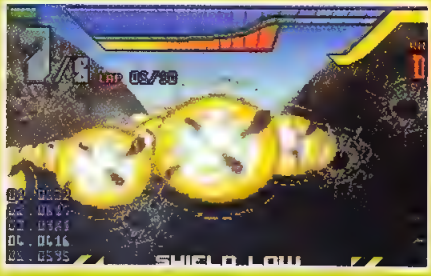
As a contestant in a highly illegal and incredibly violent racing circuit, you have the choice of numerous hover-cars, or "sleds", to choose from. Streamlined, economy-sized sleds sail along right next to huge big-rigs, and each vehicle has very distinct advantages and disadvantages. The slower cars can carry more firepower, while the faster cars are just plain faster. And the wide variety of vehicles helps to keep the game diverse while still keeping the playing field balanced.

The different tracks are full of surprises, each with weapons power-ups and multi-branching paths to the finish. There are six very diverse tracks in the game, and the graphics are among the best ever seen in the genre. The feeling of motion is incredible as you zoom along at 400-plus miles-per-hour through cities and mountain ranges, and the *Magic Carpet* engine truly gives the feeling that you're racing at breakneck speeds supported by nothing but thin air.

While *Hi-Octane* is certainly not Bullfrog's most original game, it is an action-packed shooter as good as any in the genre. And while the 32-bit systems may *already* be overcrowded with racing combat games, *Hi-Octane*, with its superior sense of control and motion, could be a strong contender for the checkered flag.

***Hi-Octane* is available now for Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn.**

Each subsequent Bullfrog release has set the standard for other developers to follow.



An enhanced MAGIC CARPET engine gives HI-OCTANE its incredibly fluid sense of speed and motion.

GENE WARS

With *Gene Wars*, Bullfrog returns to the genre it invented: the God game. But this is a God game with a twist, allowing you to play Supreme Being in a much more modern fashion: genetic engineering.

Here's the story: after your world has been completely destroyed from years of war, a group of interstellar peace-keepers comes and revokes all known weaponry, hoping that the four opposing factions will then begin living in harmony and rebuilding the devastated world. Instead, you and your foes simply begin inventing new ways to kill each other. Left without any weapons, you must rely upon your race's genetic know-how to create both hardy beasts of burden to rebuild your cities and vicious monsters to destroy your enemies. And, as you may have guessed, your opponents will be doing the same.

The gene lab is where you'll be doing most of your experimentation. Here you try different combinations of "goop" (a genetic material harvested from trees) to build the perfect beast. You can affect almost every aspect of the creatures, from their lifespan and reproduction rate to their appetite and intelligence. All of the scientific data in *Gene Wars* comes from the latest theories in genetics, and the cartoonish graphics belie the sophisticated goings-on at the heart of the game.

Gene Wars promises to keep strategy gamers on their toes, because once you unleash a creature it's there for good. If you're not paying attention, your builders will go rampant, continuing to build ad infinitum and depleting all of your resources. The war-like creatures can cause equal problems, and when they're not feeding on your enemies they will just as easily turn on you.

***Gene Wars* will be available for IBM PC in early 1996, with other formats TBA.**

Bullfrog returns to the genre that made it famous with GENE WARS.

DUNGEON KEEPER

Dungeon Keeper is a game which Bullfrog founder Peter Molyneux says will be "the best role-playing game of all-time." And while some might argue this shouldn't be too hard to accomplish, *Dungeon Keeper* both re-invents and pokes fun at the somewhat tired genre.

Available for the PC this winter, the premise of *DK* is simple enough: Instead of controlling a group of goody-two-shoes adventurers trying to banish evil from some unpronounceable land, you get to control the evil fellow they're all so hot to vanquish. Starting with a small dungeon and a fistful of gold, your goal is simple: Acquire as much treasure as possible. Of course, actually accomplishing your goal is much more complicated. In addition to the strategy and action elements in the game, *DK* utilizes *Theme Park*-esque resource management. You must hire monsters to guard your wealth, as well as expand your dungeon, carefully planning each room, trap and secret passage. As you expand, you can actually watch your Dwarf construction-workers building additions to your dungeon in real-time. But as your coffers gradually fill and your dungeon expands, you become steadily more notorious, which means stronger adventurers, in larger numbers, will begin invading your keep.

Your "employees" will prove to be much more difficult to control than in more typical business simulations. Not only will they attack and eat each other, they will constantly try to steal your treasure. There are two basic ways to avoid this. The easy way is to just pay them a larger share of the hoard, but that's not really keeping with your evil ways, now is it? The second way is both more desirable and more effective: Ritual sacrifice. Using fear as a motivational method, a few sacrifices now and again will remind your servants just who's in charge. What are a few goblins when you have an entire mountain of gold at stake?

DK uses an overhead perspective which can be rotated and zoomed to any angle and position you desire. In addition, you can "possess" any of the creatures in your dungeon and stroll around fighting the adventurers yourself. One of the coolest aspects of the game is how the perspective changes depending on the creature you choose to possess. As a cockroach, you can hide in the corners to scout the oncoming heroes from a lower vantage point. Or you can possess a dragon and blast a few fireballs from your towering viewpoint. While exploring your dungeon, you'll be treated once again to Bullfrog's real-time lighting, with heroes' torches glittering off walls and fireballs lighting up the dark, eerie hallways.

***Dungeon Keeper* will be available for IBM PC in Winter 1995, with other formats TBA.**

These dark hallways will be home sweet home in DUNGEON KEEPER.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLES

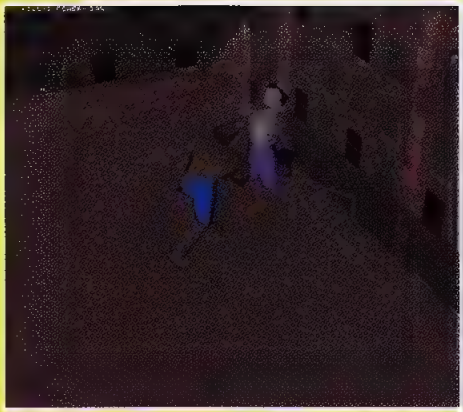
One of the most exciting games on Bullfrog's extensive development slate is *The Indestructibles*, a super-hero simulation which may well be the ultimate fighting game. You design your own hero, then send him or her out into an ultra-realistic metropolis simulator where you duke it out with other heroes for control of the city.

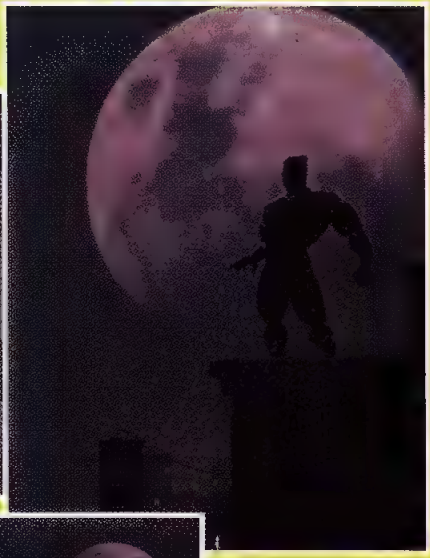
Whole cities are at your disposal. You can lift buildings and smash them over your opponents' head, or take a sucker punch at an opponent with a subway car. If too many civilians are hurt, however, you may be run out of town by the irate masses. The cities themselves will reportedly have plenty of the realistic touches which make Bullfrog games so unique. Both vehicular and pedestrian traffic will follow routine time-schedules, and if you accidentally take out a traffic light, traffic jams and accidents are sure to follow.

But there are limits to your power. Each superhuman feat is accompanied by a weakness. And we're not just talking about Kryptonite here. If you create a mutated supermensch with an arsenal of incredible powers, you may find your hero rendered useless in sunlight, making the powers potent only at night or in the shadows of buildings. This feature helps to keep the playing field balanced for the varying types of heroes you can design.

The Indestructibles uses Bullfrog's "skeletal mapping" technique, which creates incredibly life-like characters which can be altered in real-time. Lose an arm, and your character will move accordingly. Graphically, it may be Bullfrog's most impressive offering yet, combining the skeletal mapping with an "intelligent camera" which predicts your next move and finds the best viewing angle.

***The Indestructibles* will be available for IBM PC in Winter 1995 with other formats TBA.**





Create the superhero of your dreams and unleash him or her on an incredibly realistic world in THE INDESTRUCTIBLES.

THEME HOSPITAL

The second game in Bullfrog's "designer series" takes the player out of action and into traction with another unique resource management game. You must use your business acumen to guide a medical facility from its initial status as a small clinic to a huge medical complex, with surgical facilities, emergency facilities as well as research centers. Once again, the game will support an unbelievable amount of realistic details. Similar to *Theme Park*, you'll have the ability to control every aspect of the hospital's management. From employee wages down to the placement of vending machines, *Theme Hospital* gives you near-total control.

It all may sound incredibly dry, but Bullfrog has assured that the end product will not sacrifice the fun factor. To avoid the obvious grim implications the game could have, the *Theme Hospital* team designed an entirely original catalogue of ailments which you will have to research and deal with. One of these, the dreaded "long hair disease", causes victims to suffer uncontrollable hair growth, which you can actually witness as they wander through your facility.

As in *Theme Park*, you'll be able to choose the geographical location of your hospital. But you'll also get the bonus of being able to choose what time-period you'll be dealing with (Black Death, anyone?) and what your hospital's specialization will be.

In keeping with the more serious tone, the graphics won't be quite as cartoonish as in *Theme Park*, but they are far from the drab surroundings found in real-life hospitals. And the inhabitants of your hospital behave incredibly realistically, patients will pace, doctors move around their offices using their equipment, and everyone stops to buy drinks at your well-placed vending machines.

***Theme Hospital* will be available for IBM**

PC in Spring 1996 with other versions TBA.

SYNDICATE WARS

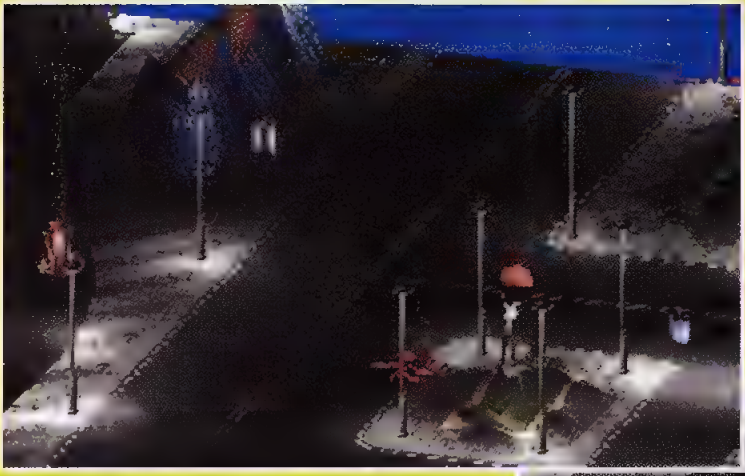
This long-awaited sequel to the PC classic *Syndicate* will actually make its debut on the PlayStation early next year, showing that Bullfrog is not just planning conversions of its PC titles for the 32-bit systems.

The original *Syndicate* gave you control of a corporation bent on global domination. Your goal was to slowly conquer the entire world, region by region, battling other syndicates and kidnapping—or even assassinating—their key personnel. At your disposal was a team of four mercenary cyborgs, which you could send into the hostile environments to do your bidding. These agents could be enhanced through research, and new weapons were always being discovered.

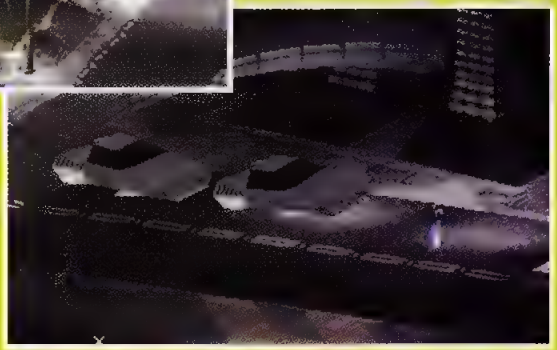
Syndicate Wars continues the struggle between the corporations, this time with even more impressive game play and destructive capabilities. In *Syndicate*, you could set civilians on fire with your flame-throwers and watch them run screaming down the street. With *Syndicate Wars*, however, you'll be able to torch everything in sight, razing entire cities if you so desire. And while *Syndicate Wars* will still maintain some of the strategy elements of *Syndicate*, Bullfrog has promised that there will be much more action in the sequel.

One of the nicest new features is the adjustable perspective. Gone is the cumbersome, three-quarters overhead perspective of the original. Now you can rotate and zoom the screen to get the best possible viewpoint of your carnage. And the real-time lighting routines really shine in *Syndicate Wars*, with plenty of nocturnal missions in oppressive cities which make the already frightening future vision that much more eerie.

***Syndicate Wars* will be available for the Sony PlayStation in December 1995, with other formats TBA.**



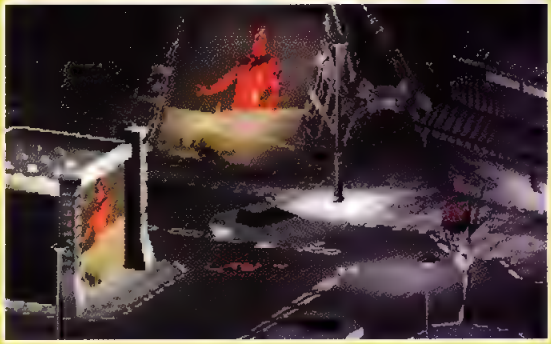
The long awaited sequel to SYNDICATE promises to be every bit as violent and action-packed as its predecessor.



CREATION

In development for quite a while now, *Creation* is both the most talked-about game on Bullfrog's current slate as well as being the one farthest from completion. Another game using a modified *Magic Carpet* engine, *Creation* has one of the most promising premises of the lot.

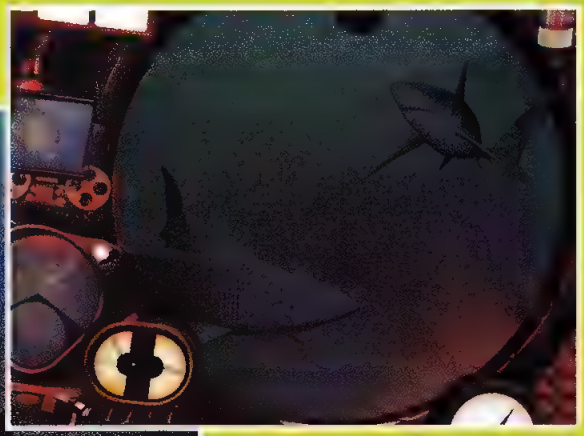
Years of neglect have caused the Earth to become uninhabitable, and a group of futuristic pilgrims has set up an underwater colony dubbed "Creation" on a distant planet. In these aquatic surroundings, lifeforms rescued from the Earth's oceans co-habitate peacefully, and the serene environs make Creation a near-utopian society. But a sentient fungus begins developing, causing strange behavior in the creatures. The fungus acts as a narcotic, infecting the host and turning the normally peaceful inhabitants of Creation into psychotic monsters.



Gliding around in your submersible, you must find the infected creatures and help them. You will be able to enlist the aid of some friendly dolphins, but you must stay sharp as it's hard to tell the infected creatures from the friendlies by appearance. And as if your work wasn't already cut out for you, you'll also have to deal with a malicious corporation that wants to utilize the fungus for its own financial gain.

While not many details about gameplay have been revealed, *Creation* has some of the most awe-inspiring graphics yet seen on a computer screen. Reportedly, the in-game graphics will be of the quality shown here, while not sacrificing the fast-paced gameplay we've come to expect from Bullfrog.

***Creation* will be available for IBM PC in Spring 1996, with other formats TBA.**



The aquatic-themed CREATION has a very intriguing premise.

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MESSY LITTER BOX

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

I don't want to sound like another Jaguar owner who's crying about what people are saying about the Jag. I really don't care. I love the Jaguar and plan to purchase carts and CD games to come. I'm writing in response to your comments in issue #2. I believe that the Saturn and Playstation are more powerful than the Jag, but I also believe that the Jaguar-CD, although not as powerful, should be able to do games roughly just as good as any new 32-bit system. Games like **Myst** and **Mortal Kombat 3** will probably be just as good as Saturn's and PlayStation's. You ask which other games are awesome for the Jag? **Iron Soldier**, **Cannon Fodder**, **Doom**, **Alien VS. Predator**, **Val d'Isere Skiing and Snowboarding** are all decent games. Enough to be compared to other games on any system. Games like **Syndicate** and **Theme Park** are not bad either. I simply cannot wait for games like **Ultra Vortek**, **Rayman**, **BattleSphere** and **Power Drive Rally**.

What I want to say to all the whiney Jaguar owners is that if you have that big a problem with the Jag, keep it on the side and buy another system. You'll see—the Jag will be around for a while.

Another question that I have is, does the term "more powerful," as in game systems, refer to speed or to memory capacity? Because according to the President of Atari, the Jaguar is as powerful, if not slightly more than, the Saturn. (Although by looking at the games I sure can't tell, but then again, you don't compare cartridge games to CD games.) It is the Playstation that is the most powerful of them all. Still, I'm glad that the Jaguar is believed to have potential. And what's the advantage of the Jaguar having a 64-bit architecture?

Finally, to end my letter, the baby picture is cute but not funny. I seriously doubt that even a 13-year-old kid can beat games like **AVP** or **Syndicate** without serious concentration. I'm sorry if my letter has no direct point but I do believe that according to ULTIMATE GAMER, a person's opinion counts and should be heard. Atari started the race and will battle to the end. I hope that end isn't soon!

Sergio Martin
Dinuba, CA 93618

BLUE LIGHTNING, the primary pack-in game for the Jaguar CD, is pretty good.

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

First off, I'd like to say that I'm an Atari Jaguar fan. When I picked up UG #2, I was at first very pleased by your editorial on pages 6 and 7, concerning Atari and their CD and VR units.

However, I was horrified at your response to Brian Bering on page 16. What are you guys smoking, anyway? How can you sarcastically ask, "Please, which other games are awesome?" Do games like **Iron Soldier** and **AVP** ring a bell? How about **Syndicate**, or **Doom**, or **Super Burnout**? I'll bet if any of these titles featured "Sonic" or "Mario," you guys would eat it up.

My friend has a Saturn and I'm still glad I went Atari. **Panzer Dragoon** looks nice, but if you can't fly where you want to, then everything else is just flash! **Daytona USA** is loaded with flickering graphics and only three tracks; surely the "mighty Saturn" could squeeze more tracks than that! (Even **Checkered Flag** gave you around ten tracks!) **Clockwork Knight**? It's crap! Again, a lot of flash and, in the end, a bore.

The picture of the baby holding the Jag controller is way out of line. Atari makes a lot of use out of the 18-button pad. How much depth is involved in a lot of Sega's overrated games?

Unfortunately, I've had to get used to all of the publications ripping up Atari. In your **Fight for Life** review, you even had to pick apart the backgrounds! Come on, just exactly how good are **Virtua Fighter**'s backgrounds? They look a lot worse to me.

I can't wait for all the magazines to jump on the bandwagon when the Jag CD and VR systems are released.

Believe it or not, I do like your magazine and will continue reading, but please...give Atari some slack. Sega, Nintendo and 3DO have certainly all had their share of totally crappy games, just as Atari has!

Rich Thomquist
Holliston, MA

Gentlemen, your comments regarding the state of the Jaguar, although not all of them are entirely valid, have been noted. To answer your questions: 1) the term "more powerful" has been used and abused by several hardware manufacturers in an effort to sway your vote as to which system is technologically superior. For example, Sega claimed that its 32X was "six times more powerful than 3DO", and that's just not entirely correct. Truth is, it's rather difficult to define clearly the term "more powerful." One could assume that it involves a combination of both speed and memory capacity. 2) We quit smoking years ago. 3) Yes, **AVP** rings a bell, but **Super Burnout**? (we're sorry, please don't hurt us!) 4) We're not backing down on this one. There is more depth in a game like **Boxxle** for the Genesis than most Jag games, and that is just not the way things should be for a 64-bit system.

Lastly, we should point out that while all platforms have had their fair share of garbage titles, the percentage of lame-o games released for the Jag is, indisputably, much higher than that of any other. Deal with it.

Delayed for more than a year, the Jag CD has finally made it to store shelves.

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

No, I don't think Atari and Jaguar stand a chance in the next-generation platform wars ("Plugged In," Issue #2).

Even if Jaguar's hardware could compete with the newer, more powerful systems, Atari has yet to deliver even a handful of excellent games. Third-parties have been reluctant to support the platform because of it lethargic sales. The same goes for retailers. And consumers? With the arrival of Saturn, PlayStation and Ultra 64, gamers (not to mention those same third-parties and retailers we talked about earlier) now have more—and better—choices than ever before. Too many, in fact. The marketplace can only support so many platforms; some of them will have to die.

And Jaguar, I'm afraid, is on the endangered species list.

Sincerely,
Robert Rhode
Janesville, WI 53546

I GOT YER BITS RIGHT HERE

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

First, I would like to say that I really enjoyed your first two issues. Finally, a magazine that gives you hard-nose info on the so-called next-generation gaming systems and software. Well, here's a couple of questions that need to be answered. Okay, you have a 32-bit system like 3DO and then you have the newer 32-bit systems like the PlayStation and Saturn. Since they're all 32-bit, why is the PlayStation said to be the best? Secondly, will the Ultra 64 and 3DO's M2 be that much better than the PlayStation as far as graphics and gameplay go? I think we've all heard the saying, "bigger isn't always better."

Ocie Mack
Cinti, OH

Dear Ocie,

In order to explain processing power per 'bit" it's easier to use the car engine analogy. A Ford Mustang could have a five-liter engine, but that won't make it faster than a three-liter Ferrari. The Ferrari is faster because the engine is more efficient and better built. The same thing applies to processors. 32-bit describes the number of bits processed simultaneously by the main chip. It doesn't take into account custom features like graphics or sound. Also, there are several different types of 32-bit processors, each different from the last. Ignore the numbers, look at the results.

64-bit will represent a step forward, but the games will do the proving. Technically, the M2 and Nintendo Ultra 64 systems will be better, but the games may be inferior. You never can tell. Would **Pac Man** be any better on a 64-bit machine?

OUTRAGE ON ULTRA

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

First of, don't get me wrong, your magazine is great. I like everything about it with the exception of one complaint. In my opinion, your coverage of Nintendo's "Ultra 64" was below par! First of all, your negative attitude about the system itself, and all your predictions of its failure due to past episodes with Nintendo.

However, if you look back ten years ago to the mid-'80s, Nintendo came out with its first home videogame system, the NES. Along with the release of the NES was Sega's Master System. These two systems were competitors in the 8-bit revolution until 1988, when the 16-bit era began for Sega with its highly successful Genesis system. Nintendo was not far behind, though. In 1990-91 it released the Super Nintendo. It didn't take long for Nintendo to take the lead of the 16-bit machines. Every time, Nintendo has managed to come out on top, no matter what! Now in the mid '90s the company is coming back to do it again. With the 32-bit Sega Saturn on its way Sept 2, Nintendo is following up with its 64-bit Ultra 64. Although the Saturn is the CD-based system and Nintendo is cartridge-based, past experiences between the two companies have proved that, in the final outcome, Nintendo will come out on top. In this letter I have also enclosed clippings on the Ultra 64 from EGM.

Justin Thorn
Kingwood, WV

Dear Justin,

Point taken, but you're wrong in a couple of instances. For one thing, the Super NES never really overtook the Genesis. It sells more carts, but there are still more Genesis units out there than Super NES. Our negative attitude is not

Standard procedure: Nintendo has kept the Ultra 64 shrouded in secrecy.

based on Ultra 64's potential, but rather on Nintendo's continual habit of going back on promises. **Killer Instinct** was originally scheduled to only ever appear on Ultra 64, now you can play it on SNES. The Ultra 64 launch has been delayed time and time again and Nintendo handles publicity for the machine with near-childish secrecy. You're still waiting confidently for a machine you've never seen, never played and don't know too much about. It's a very expensive blind date you're going on, and we hope she's worth it.

32 OR NOT TO BE?

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

I'm very interested in Sony's PSX system (PlayStation). I like fighting games like **Tekken**, **Dragon Ball Z**, and **Toshinden**. I also like sports and blast-'em-up shooting games. Your magazine is great. It has a good amount of reviews and previews. It left me a fair number of questions. Will the Playstation have good sports games, and does Sony have EA Sports making games for it? And what about the blast-'em-up shooting games like **Crazy Ivan** and **G-Police**, are they going to be any good? What I'm trying to get at is this: Is the Sony PlayStation the system I am looking for?

Jason Fuentes
Sunnyvale, CA

Dear Jason,

I hate these questions. I know what machine I would buy, but then I have my own requirements. The PlayStation and Saturn both have immensely impressive software catalogs and both have great ranges of software. Both systems have stunning sports games and both systems have a great future. Ask yourself this; How much do I want to pay for the machine I buy and what games can I get exclusively for each system? You already know the answer, so go out and buy the appropriate machine.

At Last, Atari.

Sam Tramiel talks to **ULTIMATE GAMER** about the past, present and future of the most influential game company ever.

Ultimate Gamer: Tell me about Atari's present position in the market.
ST: We see ourselves as being one of the major players on the hardware side and in software as well. Not just the Jaguar but the PC platform as well, with CD-ROM and diskette software.

UG: I know **Tempest 2000** is being released for the PC. Can you tell me what you'll be doing with that? It was one of the best titles for the Jaguar.
Sam Tramiel: It sold very well. One famous analyst got a blister on his thumb from playing it! It's a great game. It'll soon be out on PC, and there'll be a big promotion on it.

UG: What other Jaguar products will be making it to the PC?
Sam Tramiel: **Highlander** will be coming out; there'll be three different games in the Highlander series coming out on Jaguar and PC. **Flip-Out**, a Jaguar game, will come out on the PC.

UG: There's an interesting trend we've noticed. We just visited Digital Pictures, and they don't feel confident putting any support toward any of these console systems. But they feel more confident in the PC than anything else. As a matter of fact, all their products have sold better on PC than any other platform.
Sam Tramiel: Let's face it, it's a huge marketplace. You'd be a fool not to pay attention to it. On the new console side, it's relatively small. There are only hundreds of thousands.

UG: At least they're making 32-bit and above. Install bases are low for everyone.
Sam Tramiel: Exactly, so people are opening their eyes and saying, "We can't ignore this PC market; it's gigantic. We should be selling our software there."

UG: Currently the Jaguar platform has a higher installed base than the Saturn.
Sam Tramiel: Higher than Saturn but definitely less than 3DO...a lot less than 3DO.

UG: I'm told Saturns are selling at a rate of about 700 units nationally per week.
Sam Tramiel: That might be true. We're a little higher than that. Our big push right now is for Christmastime. In the summer you don't sell much hardware.

UG: So this incredibly expensive Sega system is obviously not cleaning up. You're ahead of them now. Do you think that some of what you said at E³ is starting to come true?
Sam Tramiel: We're positive we're correct: The consumer will not spend that much money on a dedicated game machine. They just won't. When the Christmas market comes alive, you'll be paying $149 for a Jaguar, not $400 for a PlayStation.

UG: Do you think that sometimes people forget that $400 is what someone in, say, the Midwest takes home in a week?
Sam Tramiel: In Silicon Valley, it's the same thing also.

UG: Will Atari be doing any price promotions besides just the regular "low price" of the system? Any trade-in type things?
Sam Tramiel: No. We've found that people are reluctant to trade things in on the systems today. This goes back to the Atari computer lab. We offered people a trade-in: Send in your Commodore 64 or your old Atari computer, and buy a new ST computer. The answers from the market study were, "No, we won't do that anymore. Our software bases are too valuable to do that."

UG: I know that you've done a lot of different promotions, free controllers, free games...
Sam Tramiel: ...and we'll be doing that all the time.

UG: Could there be another crash?
Sam Tramiel: I don't think that you can call these things crashes, even the so-called crash in 1983-'84. It wasn't a crash. That generation of machine had sold its limit. The Atari 2600 sold almost 30 million units. And that was saturation for the marketplace. And then the next generation took-off. Between the NES and the 16-bit market there wasn't a big lull, because 16-bit moved in as 8-bit moved out. It was a rather smooth move. Between 16-bit and on the next generation of 32-, 64-bit, there's a lot of confusion in the marketplace. The marketplace is still there, all those who play video games. The question is where are they going to play it? On their existing systems or with new systems? There's just confusion right now. We think $149 is a very affordable price. And they'll just buy machines at that price. They won't agonize...

UG: Is it fair to say that the interactive-games market has matured to the point where people spending $6 billion a year are just not going to go away? They're going to buy something.
Sam Tramiel: They haven't gone away since the late '70s. More keep on coming.

UG: It's fair to say that there's going to be some kind of shake-out.
Sam Tramiel: The industry is going through a real big shakedown. I don't want to mention names, but other Japanese companies besides Sunsoft are having significantly hard times.

UG: Any comment you want to make on that, maybe not toward any specific companies, but just the industry in general?
Sam Tramiel: Consolidation. Ithink it's very much like the record business. There'll be a lot of so-called artists/developers. And there'll be only a few distributors of software. That'll happen in our industry as well.

UG: Getting back to Atari, you've made some interesting, rather impressive new appointments within the company. I wonder if for the record you could just go over who some of the new personnel are, what their function will be, and how will they beef up Atari's strength when it comes to the platform war this fall?
Sam Tramiel: The most important change that we've made was hiring Ted Hoff. I've known him now for six or eight years in the industry. He worked at Time/Warner, Atari Games Tengen division. He left and worked for Fox. And now he's running our North American operation.

UG: And there are some other people who came from Sega?
Sam Tramiel: Yeah, John Currell. He's one of the VPs of Software Development. We've hired a lot of other Sega people, PA people, all different kinds of levels in the company. Our big push is getting the software for Jaguar moving. Before I came here, we were having a review. We have reviews twice a week on all our software. The software looks fantastic, our big emphasis, of course, is software. We are also working on Jaguar 2. That's a 1996 and beyond product. The code name is Jaguar 2; we might call it something else when it hits the marketplace. But we're getting ready for the next generation of this stuff.

UG: I understand that it's downwardly compatible. No matter how many people try to justify the fact that 32X and Saturn are not compatible, I think it's a travesty; I think the consumer feels ripped-off. I'm a consumer too, not just a journalist.
Sam Tramiel: I'm a consumer also, and not just the manufacturer of the hardware. And the way the hardware works sometimes, you have no choice. There are such quantum leaps that you can't use the same basic structure for the next generation. In Jaguar 1 and 2, it doesn't make sense to do it this way. Maybe three to five years from now there might be some super-duper, unbelievable stuff out there to make a much better game. And it can't be compatible. Or keeping it compatible adds up to so much more cost that it just doesn't make sense anymore. We're trying to follow the Intel paradigm of being compatible for the future.

UG: Anything else you can tell me about Jaguar 2?
Sam Tramiel: We actually have the first working silicon this week. It came in last week. The chips are called Oberon and Puck. They're characters from **A Midsummer Night's Dream**. And the design team, our guys living here in Sunnyvale, are of British descent, and they call it "Oberon and Puck," and the "Midsummer Project."

UG: How many bits is the Jaguar 2?
Sam Tramiel: It's a 64-bit system. Just much faster, more use of the 64-bit architecture, runs on a higher quad speed. Has much more impressive 3-D stuff going on. Beyond PlayStation, beyond Jaguar today, beyond Saturn today. Just a better system. Using Point-five Micron technology.

UG: Are you able to quote any stats about it? Numbers of polygons per second?

I JUST BOUGHT A VHS RECORDER AND I HAD A CHOICE OF $250 OR $600. SO WHAT AM I GETTING? FORGET IT, $250 IS JUST FINE. BRAND NAME, GOOD QUALITY, IT WORKS BEAUTIFULLY.

Sam Tramiel: Not yet, but very soon we'll be doing that. It's a "blow your socks off" machine.

UG: Is it cartridge-based, CD-based?
Sam Tramiel: We're still playing with the idea of an integrated unit that plays CDs and cartridges. And we probably will increase the RAM size as well. RAM is getting bigger now, with production. Instead of being a two-meg, it might be a three- or four-meg system. Those decisions will be made in the next two months.

UG: The license fee for third-party software for the Jaguar is actually the lowest in the industry.
Sam Tramiel: I would say so, yes.

UG: Why has Atari not had the kind of third-party support, even with the lowest license fee?
Sam Tramiel: I think that there's a number of factors. Number one, the third-party people have to take huge risks with inventory on expensive cartridge stocks. They're really nervous about getting and supporting another cart machine, where they have to invest a lot in cartridge inventories. So we've made it very simple for a lot of people. Instead of buying, license us, Atari. We'll do the port and we'll sell the software. And most people are happy with doing that Acclaim is an example of that. So we're doing it that way. On the CD side, we're shipping our CD player into the stores on August 24. We'll see if more third parties come on, because the risk is much lower then.

UG: Only about 57¢ to actually press the CD. That's without packaging?
Sam Tramiel: Roughly speaking. You can have a product finished and on the shelf for under $3. On CD. For cartridge software, it's getting close to $20 apiece. That's a big software investment for a lot of companies.

UG: Will you see more of these companies taking a risk once the Jaguar CD comes out?
Sam Tramiel: We think so. We already see a few doing that now.

UG: With regard to CD-based games, do you think it would benefit the industry if CD-based games were less expensive? The strategy behind the Jaguar is "the least expensive next-generation system."
Sam Tramiel: Absolutely, the most affordable.

UG: Software is still about the same price. It's really impossible to change the price when it's cartridges. If it's a CD-based system, would it be possible to price the software less?
Sam Tramiel: I'll be very frank and open with you. The issue about CD software, the media part of it, the hard cost is three bucks. However, the development side of it, typically, is more than a cartridge. You've got a much greater amount of space to fill up and make use of. So the development costs are three times those of a cartridge. It is a lower-cost piece of hardware.

UG: I happen to believe that games are far too expensive in general. Fifty bucks for a game means that a lot of people read our magazine to see if it's really worth it, because that's not an impulse purchase. I think if games were inexpensive to the point that they became an impulse purchase, then the platform that chose to release games at a lower price would be the dominant platform.

Sam Tramiel: We've found that people want to buy quality software. If it costs 50, 60, 70 bucks, they'll buy that software. If it's cheap and it's good, then you've got a runaway winner. People over the last 15 years have been willing to pay $50 for software. When you look at inflation, software is not going up in price. It's been staying no more than $69 at the highest. And mostly in the 49 to 59 dollar range. They sell very well at that price. There's a limit to how high you can go. We try to get them in the 50-plus range, and it works.

UG: I happen to think a lot of the reason that 16-bit sales have stalled is because you're seeing bargain bins in front of all these stores, with games: $19.99 or less. No one's going to spend $60 when they can buy three or more games for the same price.
Sam Tramiel: Well, people still are. They're paying it for the A-games, you're right. 16-bit hardware has reached its saturation point in the marketplace. No one's buying it any more. And the consumer is waiting for the next generation to become available. That's what's happening.

UG: You were quoted in "Next Generation" saying that you weren't 100 percent happy with all the games for the Jaguar. I'm wondering what's yet to come, in terms of the killer app that's going to sell the system off the shelf to the average consumer? I think most people in the industry agree that software sells the system. It doesn't matter what the platform is, if there's a game people want to play, they'll buy the system to play it.
Sam Tramiel: As long as it's affordable. **Rayman** from UBISoft is going into production next week, should be on the market in September. That's a killer game, a great game. We hope we'll have some jump on the CD platform. But you can get Rainman for the Jaguar for $49. That should do very well. Our **Brett Hull Hockey** game is coming up this fall on cartridge and on CD. That should be fantastic software. We have 50 or more titles coming up around Christmas.

UG: Any you care to name between now and Christmas?
Sam Tramiel: For the CD alone we're shipping out a game called **Blue Lightning**, which is a conversion of the Lynx game of the same name, and that was a great title. We've made a version of that for Jaguar and CD. We have **Vid Grid**, which is a lot of fun, a puzzle/rock video combo. We have a sample of **Myst** on the Jaguar, in the package. Myst looks wonderful. The delays aren't there, like today. You push the button for the next scene, and boom, it comes up right away.

UG: As a side note, we just received **Blue Lightning** for Jag CD for our magazine and Namco just released **Air Combat**. It seems that the new technology is leading an awful lot of companies to release Flight Simulators for the next generation systems. Do you think this move towards more serious games is a good thing for the Jaguar and the games industry in general?
Sam Tramiel: We were having a debate just last week about the issue of flight sims for the Jag. Like the flight sim from Microsoft and Sub Logic. And what kind of player plays what kind of system, and what kind of software? The consensus was not to do a serious flight sim on Jaguar; people want to have fun playing the Jag.

UG: For some reason, a lot of people in the industry seem to feel that a mascot associated with the system is important. I don't think that you can actually design a mascot for a system, I think they happen by accident.

Sam Tramiel: I agree with you 100 percent. People say, "what's your mascot?" And I say," As soon as it hits, I'll let you know." We're developing two potential mascot games. And if they hit, great, we'll be right there with it and support it like no one's business. But which one it will be, I don't know.

UG: I think that it's completely by accident.
Sam Tramiel: One game we're excited about is called **Defender 2000**. And that's looking really good.

UG: There seems to be this strange trend and fondness towards retro gaming. Of course Atari has that history.
Sam Tramiel: We're very lucky with that. I just got a letter again from one of the users, a nice young man, who said, "Please, I love Atari, I love my Jag. You guys are it. You've got this tremendous library of titles (he had over 30). Please come out with these games on Jag." The old and updated versions. And we're doing that with a lot of games right now. We'll have one on CD, the compendium of about five or eight original 2600 titles in their original form, for a very attractive price. We'll release probably three compendiums that way.

UG: That has to do with Atari's history as a company. When I talk to a lot of your product people and producers, they're all passionate about game play. I think the big trend in the industry is graphics.
Sam Tramiel: I just think that maybe it's in the blood or the genes here in the company, or maybe it's just prevalent as general attitude, that seems to be in everyone I speak to, game play is paramount.

UG: I think that a lot of companies will do a lot of things that I consider to be crass, something that's not good, just to make a buck. And then there are companies that, I believe happen to really care. And I get that from Atari, as one of the companies on that list.
Sam Tramiel: And luckily, the software is coming up on a consistent basis, stuff they're shipping out nicely now. **White Men Can't Jump** is a four-player game, a lot of fun. We shipped that with Team Top, our four-player adapter, for free. Blue Lightning, **Super Burn-Out**, the motorcycle game. They'll keep on rolling out on a regular basis. Which is very important, of course.

UG: Let's talk about your plans for "Fourth Quarter." How do you intend to beat the competition?
Sam Tramiel: First, we've expanded our distribution significantly. We'll be in almost 500 Walmart stores this fall. A bunch of other stores in the East Coast and the Midwest. We've increased our distribution by the thousands. We're in 85 percent of the top-selling stores, which is 285 stores that they have. Hopefully, we'll be in the rest soon. That's how much we're in. We're also going into the Software Etc. Stores. Another important increase. Our whole structure is to advertise on TV, magazines, radio; "Here's Jaguar, $149, the next generation, with great software, go check it out in your store."

UG: What do you say to a retailer who can't carry all these systems?
Sam Tramiel: (?) That $149 is a very compelling retail price.

UG: I liken it to buying a TV set. When you look at the TV sets, I'd like to get the $1200, 35-inch TV, with the flat screen that's black and perfect, you know what I mean? This one's a 25-inch, it's just as good.
Sam Tramiel: I just bought a VHS recorder, and I had a choice of $250 or $600, so what am I getting? Forget it, $250 is just fine. Brand name, good quality, it works beautifully.

UG: I happen to think also, that when people get a look at Jaguar titles, like **AVP**, **Tempest**, **Doom** in particular. Doom on Jaguar is the best of all the versions out there. I don't care what Sega says.
Sam Tramiel: There's no question, even the makers of Doom say the same thing.

UG: Can you explain some of the differences between the Ultra 64 and the Jaguar? What do you feel the differences are between those two systems? They're both 64-bit. How are they different or similar?
Sam Tramiel: There's one gigantic difference. Jaguar's here, Ultra 64 isn't here. That's a very important difference.

UG: That's a brilliant quote.
Sam Tramiel: I'm not sure what else is different about it. Nintendo's been talking about this thing for a long time, we'll see if it comes out in the summer of '96.

UG: I'm told it's been pushed back now to September of '96.
Sam Tramiel: I've heard all kinds of stories about Ultra 64. I just won't know enough until I see a real machine. There's too many rumors and lies. When I see it, I'll know what it really is. At $250, if that's what they hold at, even at that price, where it's better than the Saturn or the PlayStation, it's still too much money. We were at $250 with the Jag in 1993 and '94, we sold a good number of machines, but there's a limit to how much you can sell at that price. It's not a mass-market price.

UG: Will you be doing any different kind of bundling?
Sam Tramiel: We'll do all kinds of different packaging. We're giving Ted really free reign in the U.S. He's running the U.S. operation. I'm here to work on the hardware development, getting more software titles in and helping out any way I can. But Ted is the one who's doing it. And he believes strongly in the marketing side, in getting the platform known in the marketplace.

UG: People are spending a lot of money, fourth quarter, probably more than any other fourth quarter in the history of this industry, especially with Sony entering the marketplace. About how much would you be spending?
Sam Tramiel: I won't give you the exact figure, but we are spending double-digit millions of dollars on marketing, and we'll be doing a guerrilla-marketing technique. Going back to our Commodore 64 experience, we were up against TI and Atari with their computer line, and they totally outspent us, but we advertised very effectively. We were in the stores they were in, and we were much lower priced. Consumers went for the Commodore 64 in droves. So we want to make people aware that we're there. We can't match Sony's spending. Let 'em spend a fortune and God bless them! Parents are going to see it and say, "What? $300? Forget it! I'll buy you the $149 machine."

UG: This is what I think is going to happen, I don't think it's going to matter who spends how much. A lot of new people are going to be buying new systems. I think you'll see a lot of game systems flying off shelves this Christmas. I don't know if it's going to be determined by who spends the most money.
Sam Tramiel: It won't be. We did a study with Alexander & Associates in New York. It shows that less than five percent of the gaming public will spend $400 for a game machine.

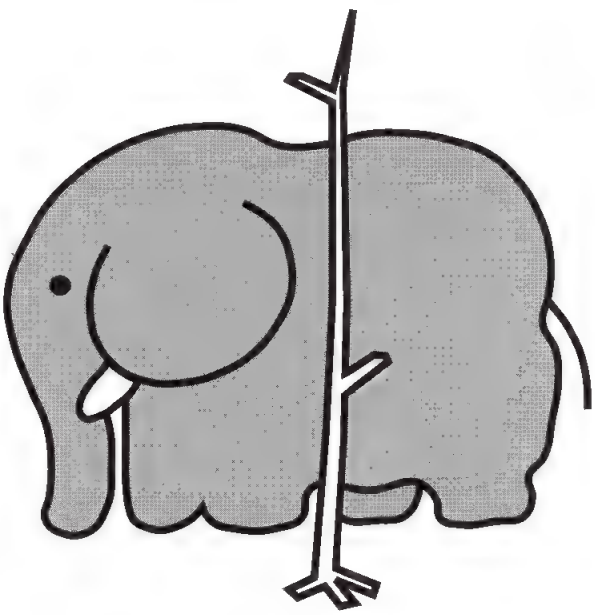
UG: There was another report that confirmed it.
Sam Tramiel: Exactly, Data Quest. We were happily surprised with their numbers. Maybe 500,000 units in that price range will sell this Christmas. And after that...it's too much money.

UG: On a side question, regarding your settlement with Sega, part of the deal involves some exchange of software, is anything moving in that direction?
Sam Tramiel: The funny part is our library was more worthwhile to them, than their's was to us. Because the software must be at least one-year-old before either side can get it, so the Atari library of year-old software is very valuable. It's all the great old Atari titles. So they're going to make some compendiums on Saturn, Genesis, and Game Gear of Atari titles. Next year it will be better for us. We can go after the **Virtua Racer** and **Virtua Fighter** and that kind of stuff. Their new good titles.

UG: So, we'll see Virtua Fighter on the Jag one of these days then?
Sam Tramiel: Eventually, yeah.

UG: With no resistance from Sega?
Sam Tramiel: That's our agreement.

Can you spot the elephant in this picture?

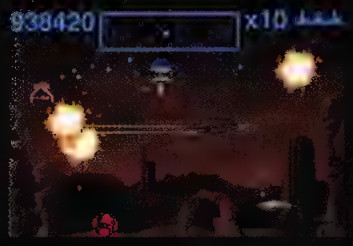


If so, you're probably smart enough to figure out that paying $149 for a 64-bit Jaguar makes more sense than paying over $300 for a 32-bit system.

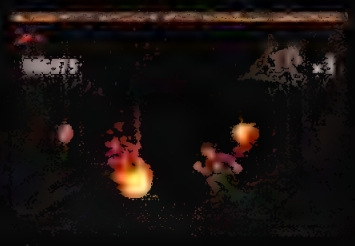
JAGUAR™

64-bit • $149*

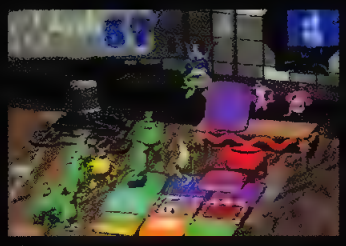
The most advanced graphics out there. Twice the bits for half the price. And over 40 cerebellum-scrambling games to choose from. If you still don't get why the Jaguar's a better deal, maybe getting that second lobotomy will help.



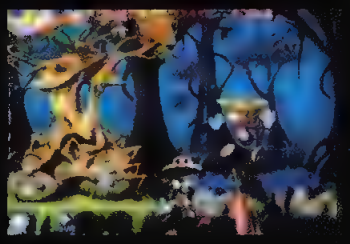
Defender 2000™
Just what you've been waiting for. More enemies and more weapons to destroy them with. Plus 3D graphics, killer explosions and a kickin' soundtrack.



Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure™
You're the son of Pitfall Harry, scouring the Mayan jungles for your kidnapped dad. Feature film-quality animation makes for pendulums that slice and crocodiles that bite.



FlipOut!™
Not exactly the kind of puzzles you find in the Sunday paper. From Planet Earth to Planet Phrohmaj, strange little aliens taunt you as you try to solve these puzzles.



Rayman™
It's a dream come true. You're a superhero battling the arch-nemesis attempting to destroy the world. Each colorful level is teeming with cartoon-quality graphics.

White Men Can't Jump™
Rules? What rules? On the way to the Slam City Tournament, anything goes. Comes with a free Team Tap multi-player adapter for up to four-player action.

Ultra Vortek™
With at least six special moves each, they're seven fighters you don't want to meet in a dark alley. But meeting them on a video screen is pretty cool when you kick their butts.

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Made in the U.S.A.
of domestic and imported components

ATARI

How do they do that?

BLADEFORCE

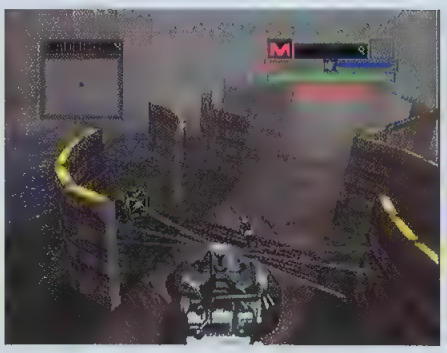
The 3DO has recently undergone an unbelievable transformation. The system is now over two years old but with the exception of a handful of games like **Road Rash**, **SSF II Turbo**, **Return Fire** and **Need for Speed**, there have been relatively few "must-have" titles available for it. The amazing thing is, with the next-generation competition closing in, you'd expect things to be winding-down for 3DO. That is not the case.

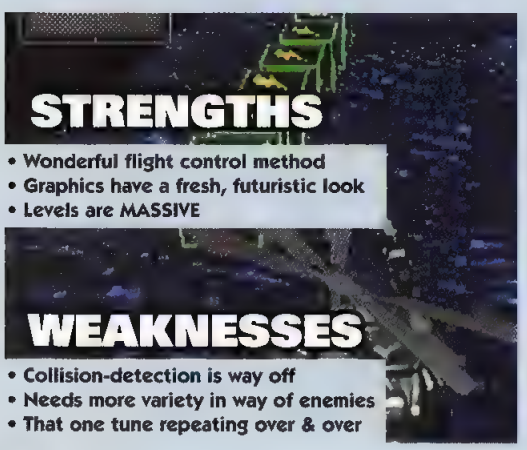
Not with games like this one. **Bladeforce** could very well be the 3DO killer-app of the year. The game's overall package is very appealing; from its graphics to its control method, the game just smokes. The year is 2110 and the crime rate of Mega Grid has gone absolutely out of control. Evil, scum-sucking criminal bosses like Terrence Pitt have their mobs of trigger-happy thugs to do their bidding. But no, you're not going to take it anymore.

Using a heli-pack, you fly through levels in first-person perspective. The game's big appeal lies in its no-rails-mentality; you can go wherever you want to. There's plenty to destroy as well, although the majority of targets at this stage of development are red-glowing turrets and the like. Hopefully we'll see a little more variety by the time the final hits the shelves. At the very least, it would be nice to see some moving enemy characters and vehicles.

The visual element of BLADEFORCE is top-shelf. The variety of enemies could be improved, though.

The control in Bladeforce is awesome—end of story. Use your B button to move forward and your L and R buttons to bank left and right respectively. This flight-control scheme works perfectly and feels even better. Hit the A button for standard fire and press the C button to launch heat-seekers. You'll find you want to view your



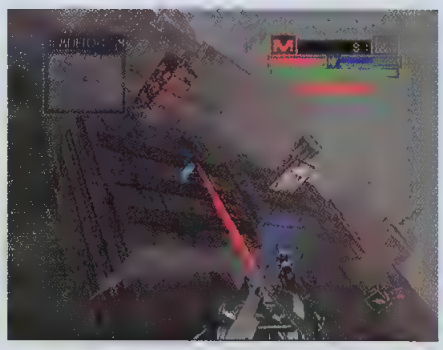


STRENGTHS

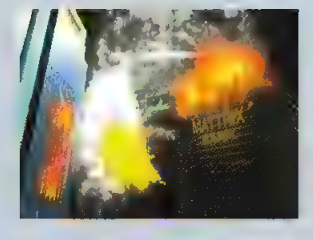
- Wonderful flight control method
- Graphics have a fresh, futuristic look
- Levels are MASSIVE

WEAKNESSES

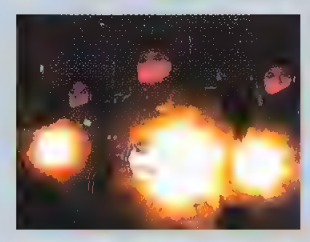
- Collision-detection is way off
- Needs more variety in way of enemies
- That one tune repeating over & over



Swoop in low to take out those red towers by locking on and letting go.



The city of Mega Grid is in deep you-know-what.



Pitt's mobsters instill some fear into the public.

Don't screw with the Steel Medusa Sisters.

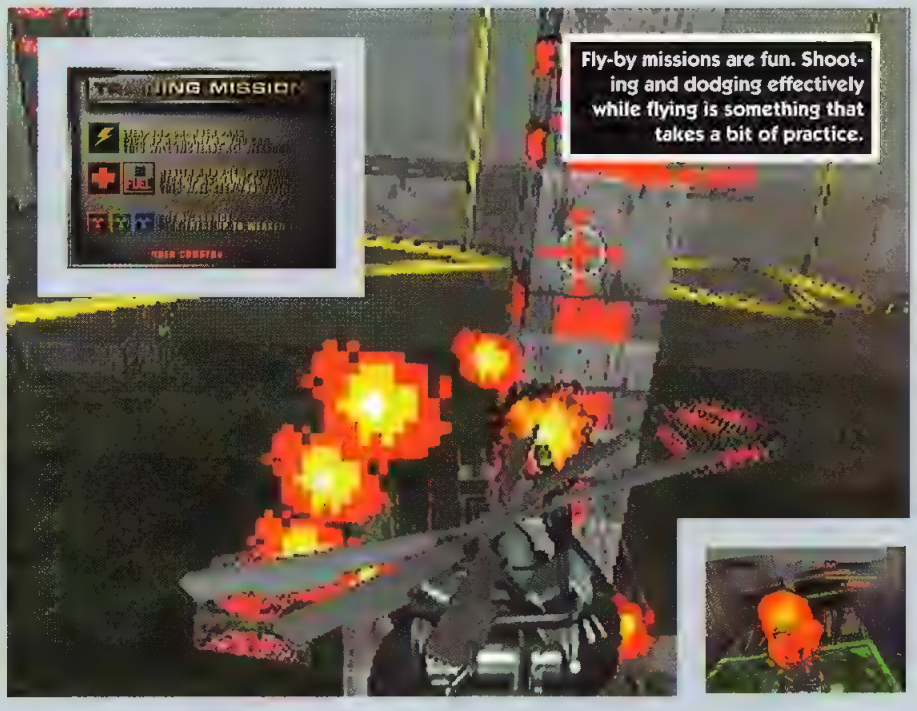
Pyro Megaly and his flame-throwing vehicle of doom.

Ugly Two-Head is truly a mental case.

Boris Cheetum is the sleazy lawyer with no morals.

Eddy Extasy's rather well-endowed little tart.

You. And don't put up with any crap, either.



Fly-by missions are fun. Shooting and dodging effectively while flying is something that takes a bit of practice.

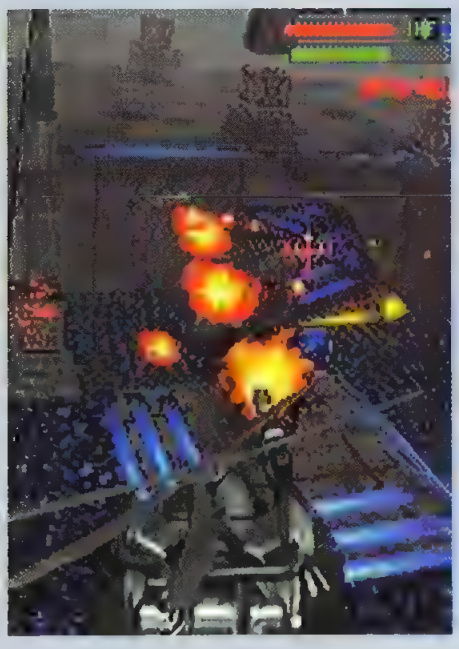
map fairly often, because some of the levels are absolutely huge.

The engine behind Bladeforce will make you question whether it's running off a PlayStation—it's that good. The programmers at Studio 3DO have apparently discovered a neat little way of dealing with the chop-chop often associated with advancing graphic terrain. The ground surfaces are tiled somewhat like polygons. In the distance, the individual tiles are "fogged", and these fogged tiles subsequently become less cloudy the closer they get to you. This method of tiling sections of terrain not only effectively creates the illusion of depth, but also eases up the 3DO processor workload. In addition, it gives the hardware some breathing room to speed up the rebuild.

One gripe I have with the game is that the collision-detection in the latest Alpha needs work. For example, even when it seems as though you'll clear a platform when going underneath it, you end up smashing your blades on the object.

Some additions and adjustments here and there would make Bladeforce a serious force to be reckoned with in the gaming world. Let's hope Studio 3DO is listening.

—Jim Loftus



INFO

Game:	Bladeforce
Format:	3DO
Publisher:	Studio 3DO
Game Style:	3D Shooter
Completion Status:	70%
Release date:	December
Price:	TBA

PRIMAL RAGE

PRIMAL RAGE on the 3DO looks crisp, although the characters are a bit smaller than the coin-op's.

Time to crank up the sound system. **Primal Rage** has found its way onto the 3DO and as things stand right now, this is the hottest home conversion so far.

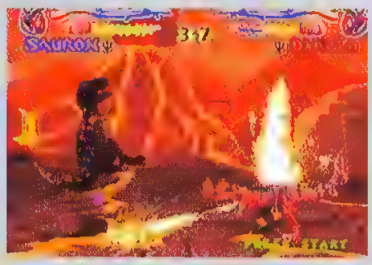
First things first. Aside from a slight shrinkage in characters, the graphics have largely been kept intact. The beasts are rendered nicely and move at a pretty respectable, if not perfect, frame rate. There is plenty of parallax as well.

In the control/playability department, response times and collision detections are all in place and the game feels very close to the arcade version. Okay, so you may have to deal with the clunkiness of the 3DO control pad, but hey—who said life was fair? To get that true Primal coin-op feel, we attached a Genesis-compatible arcade stick to an adapter and plugged those into the 3DO's control port. It makes a real difference.

The Endurance Match feature on the 3DO version lets two players hand-pick four creatures each. This is similar to tag team-style play found in games like **King of Fighters '94** and **'95**. Players battle it out using selected characters in a consecutive order, the goal being to outlast the other player's supply of monsters.

Things are really shaping up for the 3DO. Not only is the game drought over, but the selection of quality, top-selling titles for play on the system is growing as well. Must-have games like Primal Rage will help to breath new life into the Trip Monster.

—Jim Loftus



Diablo gives Talon a hot foot.

STRENGTHS

- Graphics are detailed and sharp
- Sound effects faithful to the coin-op
- Endurance Matches are a lot of fun

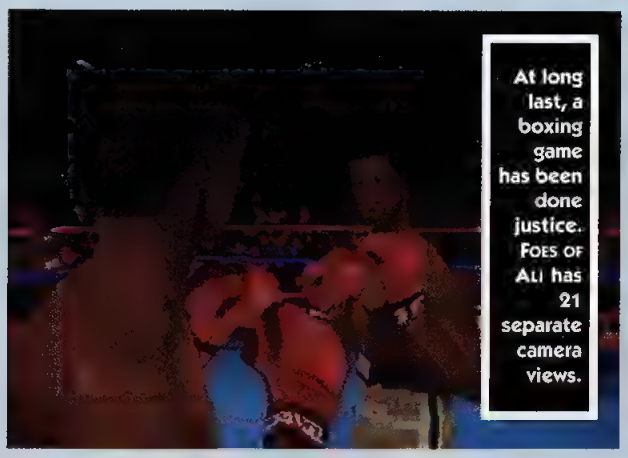
WEAKNESSES

- Characters are slightly smaller than the original arcade version's
- The music is a bit weak

INFO

Game:	Primal Rage
Format:	3DO
Publisher:	LG Software
Game Style:	Fighting
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	November
Price:	TBA

FOES OF ALI



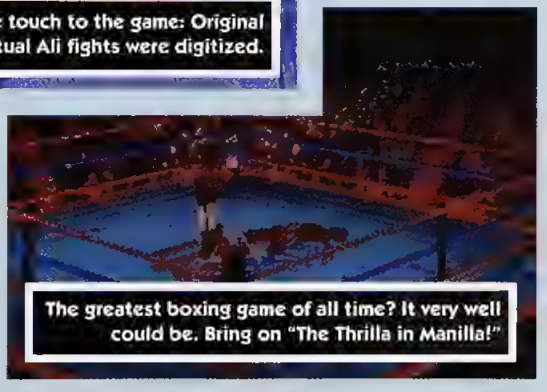
At long last, a boxing game has been done justice. Foes of Ali has 21 separate camera views.

EA added a nice touch to the game: Original tickets from actual Ali fights were digitized.

I love Tuesday nights. That's when I take command of the castle by grabbing a cold Miller Genuine and switching on the Sony to get my weekly dosage of boxing action on USA's **Tuesday Night Fights**. There's nothing more basic than two men getting into a ring to test their wills.

There have been some valiant attempts at translating the sport of boxing to video-game format, but many titles have fallen short of the mark. I always had a feeling that someday, somebody would create the perfect boxing game. That day has come.

Foes of Ali, from EA Sports, is a very ambitious project. The game breaks new ground in several respects—most notably the variety of camera angles. Over 21 individual viewpoints are accessible: Referee, Judge, Shoulder, TV Broadcast, Glove Cam and Overhead, among others. And if none of those cut it for you, you can adjust the camera to practically any angle imaginable via the L and R buttons. Next up is control. EA has done a marvelous job with providing realistic—not to mention vital—moves for real world boxing. Setting up the jab, feinting punches and using side-to-side movements are all essential boxing tools and necessary for a successful bout. Character movements animate smoothly, although they sometimes feel sluggish. It's still early, though, so we'll see how that shapes up.

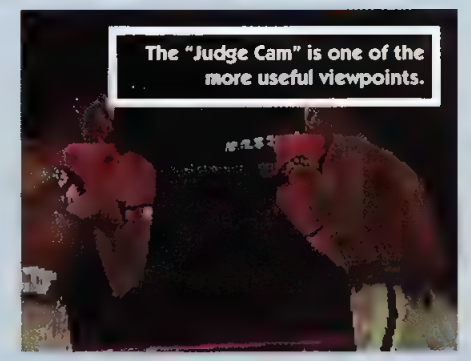


The greatest boxing game of all time? It very well could be. Bring on "The Thrilla in Manilla!"

The 3DO hardware has gotta be smoking on this one. The visual aspect of **Foes of Ali** is simply fantastic and gives even the mighty PlayStation a run for its money. The faces of legends like Ali, Frazier and Spinks are rendered very nicely and recognizable even at super-close-range. The only no-show is big George Foreman, presumably because of prior contractual obligations to Acclaim's **Foreman for Real** game.

The 3-D approach is an obvious choice for boxing games. In first-person perspective, if you accumulate heavy damage to the head, your vision becomes more and more blurred. Fighters faces can become bloodied too. I for one am really looking forward to the final on this one. As Mills Lane might say, "Let's get it on!"

—Jim Loftus



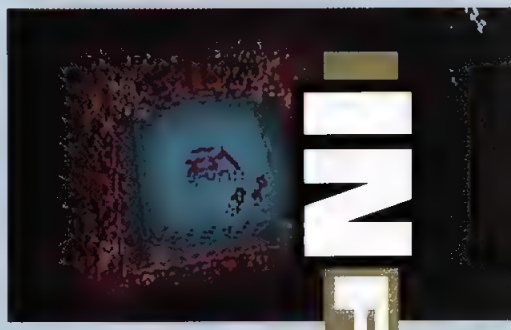
The "Judge Cam" is one of the more useful viewpoints.

STRENGTHS

- 21 different camera angles
- Boxers accumulate physical damage
- Options 'n' statistics out the yin-yang

WEAKNESSES

- I'll be honest: There is nothing that sucks about this game—NOTHING



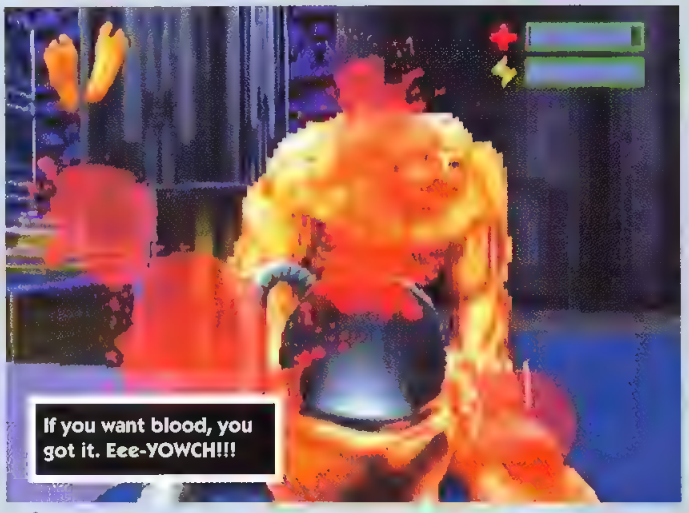
INFO

Game:	Foes of Ali
Format:	3DO
Publisher:	Electronic Arts
Game Style:	Sports
Completion Status:	40%
Release date:	November
Price:	$59.95

PO'ED

The whole **Wolfenstein/Doom** thing has been working pretty well for many game developers. Well-known titles like **Dark Forces** and **Alien vs Predator** have provided players with three-dimensional, realistic environments. And while there are a lot of "me-too" 3-D games available, the odds of any one of them being innovative are slim to none.

PO'ed is different. The game takes the standard walk-through-hallways scenario and turns it on its side. Fitted with a jet pack, your character has the ability to hover around his environment and truly investigate his surroundings. This is much more three-dimensional than the usual approach. Although a bit difficult to get the hang of at first, up, down, forward and backward movements are all possible. Kick-in your jet pack and head straight toward the ceiling; then, tap your forward thrusters a bit to drop downward and land onto a platform. Look down to find yourself ten stories up. Taking advantage of a common fear—acrophobia—worked effectively in **Jumping Flash**, and it works pretty well in PO'ed, too.

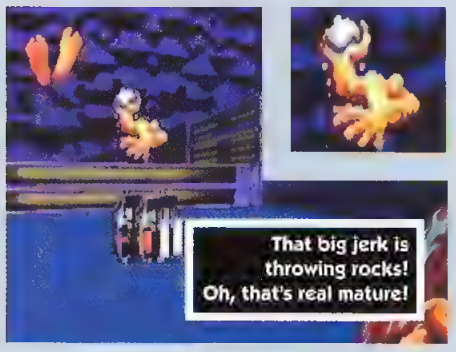

If you want blood, you got it. Eee-YOWCH!!!

There's no shortage of weapons in this game, although some of them are a tad bizarre. Whack an enemy in the head with a frying pan or drill the daylights out of him with a power-drill—it's up to you.

The enemies in PO'ed have been rendered in a rather distinctive style. Some of the characters are just out-and-out weird; take the butt guys, for instance. These nasty-ass critters shoot stinky poop-projectiles at you. You don't exactly see that every day.

Without a doubt, one of the most appealing aspects of the game is the fact that it gives the player a great feeling of control over his surroundings. Thanks to newcomer game developer Any Channel, PO'ed offers a much-appreciated twist to a genre which has grown somewhat tiresome. The only gripe I have with the game is fluidity of movement; texture-mapped walls and other elements put quite a drain on the 3DO's hardware abilities and as a result, the graphics plod along at a less-than-desirable pace. Still, PO'ed looks promising. 3DO owners should definitely make it a point to check it out.

—Jim Loftus


That big jerk is throwing rocks! Oh, that's real mature!

STRENGTHS

- Innovative jet pack control
- Cool, violent weapons
- Bizarre enemies to contend with

WEAKNESSES

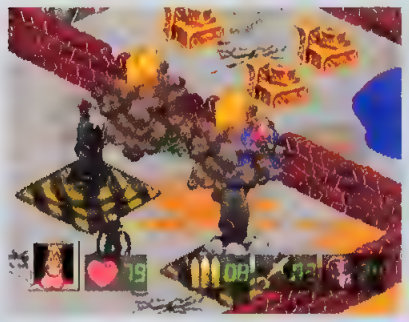
- Sluggish rebuild
- Control takes a bit of getting used to
- Somewhat repetitive gameplay

INFO

Game:	PO'ed
Format:	3DO
Publisher:	Any Channel
Game Style:	3D Action
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	October
Price:	$59.95

CAPTAIN QUAZAR

Cute but violent. Kind of like Cyndi Lauper.



Strange boss monsters attempt to halt your progress.

A long time ago, in an arcade far, far away, I once played a game called **Commando**. It was by a little-known company called Japan Capsule Computing. They later shortened their name to Capcom and made a couple of beat-'em-ups you may have heard of. **Commando** though, was a work of genius. **Captain Quazar** is attempting to borrow from that genius.

And it seems they've managed to do a remarkably nice job. Captain Quazar is a "wacky" romp through the dark reaches of the universe with a goofy cartoon hero of the **Space Ace** ilk. However, that's about where the similarity ends, because this game is about random, unjustifiable violence. Basically, as far as we can tell, your sole task is to wipe out all forms of alien life, especially the tentacled variety.

To this end you have to rush around a scrolling background laying waste to everything you encounter. That would be fun in itself, but there are minor puzzles to solve and some pretty major weapons to collect.

Best of all is the fact that you can blow up virtually every object you encounter. I like to blow things up and so this came as a refreshing change, certainly as far as 3DO games are concerned.

Sadly though, the graphics fail to live up to the promise of the gameplay. You really should be able to expect more from a 32-bit system and choppy scrolling is unforgivable.

The sprites are funny, but slightly chunky. Many of the visual failings are eclipsed by a fun and (literally) explosive soundtrack. There's a little work to be done on this yet, but so far it looks just dandy.

—Frank O'Connor

STRENGTHS

- Fast and violent fun
- Imaginative creatures
- Lots of power!

WEAKNESSES

- Slightly weak graphics
- Less than perfect scrolling
- Chunky sprites

INFO

Game:	Captain Quazar
Format:	3DO
Publisher:	Studio 3DO
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	70%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

LOADED

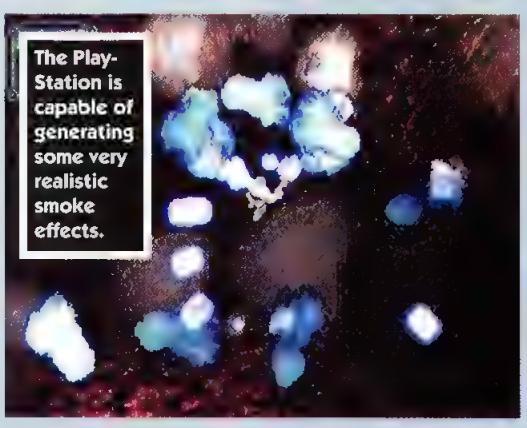
Get a "load" of this. AAARRGHH!!!

You thought the movie TOTAL RECALL was intense? Try LOADED on for size. The evil guards in this room have been replaced by smoldering carcasses, thanks to a serious dose of firepower from Mamma's mega-gun.

Wow. Talk about carnage; this game makes **Legacy of Kain** look like a day at the beach. Take the overhead action of **Smash TV**, stir in a whole lotta blood and gore from **Mortal Kombat** and what do you get? In this case, **Loaded**—a hyper-violent shoot-'em-up for the PlayStation.

The visuals in this game are downright incredible. The graphics engine in Loaded provides us with a three-quarter, overhead viewpoint and it looks smooth as a baby's ass. Not only does the game move like butter, but the way in which the graphics are represented on-screen is something special as well. Walls and floors shift around in proper perspective as you progress through each level, and as a result, give the impression of depth.

Another feature worth mentioning is light-source shading. There is a variety of different light sources throughout each level, and depending on where you're standing (in relation to the light), your character is bathed in a glow of varying degree. When firing from your blaster, the area in which you're standing is illuminated, too. Excellent smoke effects, similar to the ones previously displayed in **Destruction Derby**, are provided when your gun-blasts hit walls and certain in-room items. With this kind of attention-to-detail, Loaded makes a wonderful first impression.



The PlayStation is capable of generating some very realistic smoke effects.

Vox, Butch, Bounca and Mamma are just some of the colorful characters you can choose from—all are armed with their own type of weaponry. Our favorite is Fwank, who looks sadistically like John

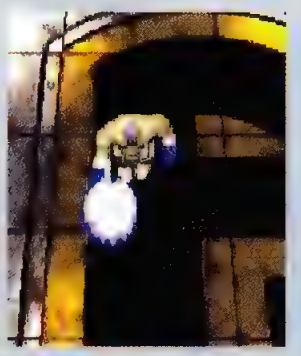
STRENGTHS

- A new level of parallax scrolling
- Digitized voices threaten the player
- Mega-weapons galore

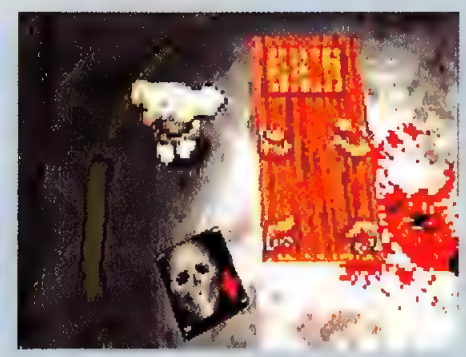
WEAKNESSES

- Somewhat limited gameplay
- "Load" times
- Most levels look a bit similar

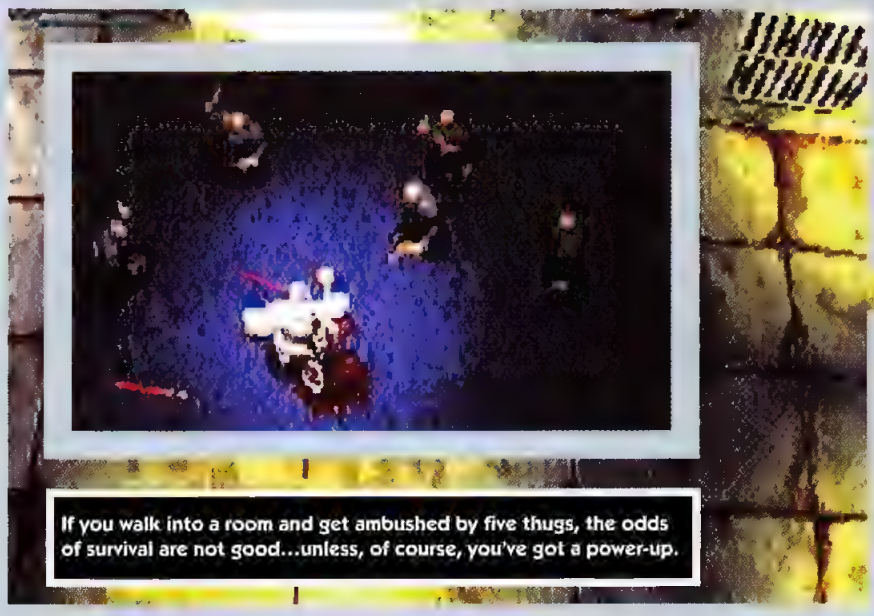
The fluidity of control over your firepower is one of LOADED's greatest aspects.



The game lets you adjust scaling. You can zoom in for close-range combat. Zoom out for a wide-angle viewpoint to see more of the screen at one time. Either way, it's still a blast-a-thon.



Power-ups are all-important. This "Death Box" boosts the player's weapon immensely.



If you walk into a room and get ambushed by five thugs, the odds of survival are not good...unless, of course, you've got a power-up.

This cracked cement wall hides a secret passage.

Wayne Gacy—a fat clown with a demented grin and very large bazooka.

After selecting your character, the massacre begins. To progress through the game, you need to acquire color-coded key cards which unlock doors to new areas. There is also a mapping feature which lets you track your progression. Important items can occasionally be found underneath fixtures like tables and chairs, and hidden entrances to secret passageways are also sprinkled throughout. In other words, if you're not quite sure where to go next, just shoot everything. Remember: If it moves, shoot it. If it doesn't move, shoot it anyway. This method may sound crude, but it could mean the difference between advancing to the next level and "game over".

Now for the real meat and potatoes: The violence. It wouldn't be advisable to let your local congressman get his grubby little paws on this game, that's for sure. Yeah, we may acknowledge the fact that it's only a video game and that it's probably safer than working for the Postal Service, but try and tell that to those paranoid dimwits. Your character can cover a lot of ground with a standard gun but with the addition of a power-up, your weapon has the added potential of dealing out massive, MASSIVE amounts of firepower. Just one "Death Box" converts basic bursts of gunfire into continuous streams of gunfire. Hosing down a dozen enemies in a non-stop laser-beam shower is really gratifying; victims disintegrate into piles of bloody ground beef.

Gremlin Interactive, the developer of Loaded, has done one hell of a job so far with the game. Those wishing to vent their anger and frustration after a long day of dealing with their pin-head boss at the office will no doubt enjoy the mindless, rapid-fire action Loaded has to offer.

—Jim Loftus

Blast the boulders...

...into oblivion!

INFO

Game:	Loaded
Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Interplay
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	40%
Release date:	December
Price:	$59.95

SEGA RALLY

The cars are particularly impressive, with smooth animation and incredible detail.

Daytona USA was always a game that was going to take some beating, but when Sega itself tried to update the formula, it may have fallen a little short. **Sega Rally** was the next racing game from AM2's secrecy-shrouded studios, and it completely failed to set the world on fire.

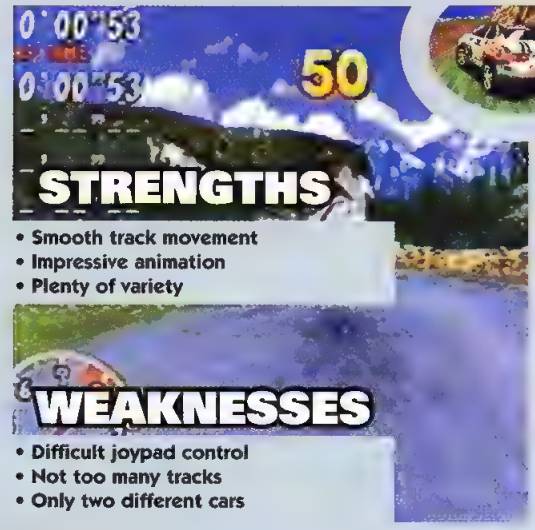
Personally, I think it's a lot more playable and fun than Daytona USA, but the grittily realistic graphics may have lacked the colorful visual thrills of Daytona. As a result, Daytona is still king of the castle in the racing stakes. The Saturn version of Sega Rally though, is infinitely better than the Saturn version of Daytona.

Even at this early stage, it is perfectly apparent that the graphic engine has been improved, running at more than twice the pathetic frame rate of Saturn Daytona. Silky smooth tracks whizz under your wheels with reckless abandon. Smoothly animated cars try to smash you into the side of the track and it all feels so fast.

In terms of playability, this is a very different proposition from Daytona. Where that game was a strategic and technical driving exercise, this is a test of navigation skills and sheer reflex. The tiniest error can send your car spinning across the mud and into a very unforgiving tree.

Rally driving is a sport that's huge in Japan and Europe, but not quite so huge over here. That shouldn't stop you from enjoying the racing experience offered here. Like Daytona, you can select different cars and different tracks. Unlike Daytona, it makes a tremendous difference which car or track you choose. Sega Rally is hot.

—Frank O'Connor



STRENGTHS

- Smooth track movement
- Impressive animation
- Plenty of variety

WEAKNESSES

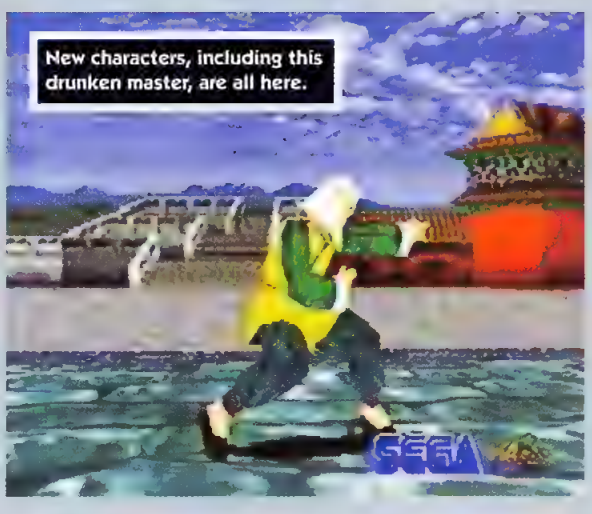
- Difficult joypad control
- Not too many tracks
- Only two different cars

INFO

Game:	Sega Rally
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Game Style:	3D Racing
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Although very, very early, the Saturn version of VF2 is looking almost perfect.



New characters, including this drunken master, are all here.

Sega's Saturn looks like it's finally coming of age. Criticism has been levelled at the machine since its launch in Japan in November last year. Much of that criticism has been pointed squarely at the Saturn's inability to handle 3-D environments, especially compared with the Sony PlayStation. **Virtua Fighter 2** is here to settle those arguments.

The game is at a very early stage, but already Sega's AM2 division is making lofty promises about the performance of their new graphics engine. Sega are officially claiming that Virtua Fighter 2 on Saturn will be indistinguishable from its arcade parent.

The Virtua Fighter 2 arcade machine is perhaps the most impressive-looking game around. The characters are fully texture-mapped and move convincingly in a 3-D environment, unmatched in any other game. To port this to Sega's Saturn would not only be a miracle of programming compromise, it would be the most solid business decision Sega will ever make.

If Virtua Fighter 2 is as good as Sega are promising, then they will tie up the Japanese market for good. Virtua Fighter 2 has been number one in the Japanese arcade charts since its launch almost a year ago. It has attained a level of success the industry hasn't seen since **Street Fighter 2**, or less recently, **Pac-Man**. This is the most important property Sega owns.

Sega still has a lot of work to do, but much of the character animation and polygon builds can be taken directly from the arcade machine. All that is left to do is keep the frame rate at between 30 and 60 frames-per-second without sacrificing either the texture mapping or the 3-D backgrounds, such as the bridge.

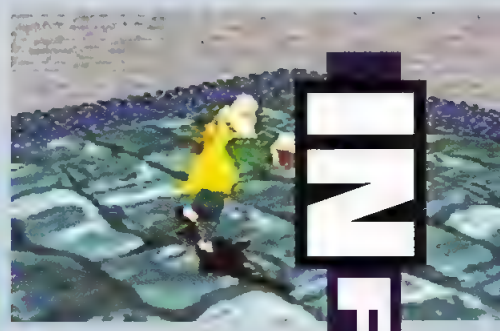
—Frank O'Connor

STRENGTHS

- Incredible 3-D characters
- Deep, challenging gameplay
- Huge scope and variety

WEAKNESSES

- Pushes the machine to its limits
- Not too different from VF1
- Steep learning curve



INFO

Game:	Virtua Fighter 2
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Game Style:	3-D fighting
Completion Status:	40%
Release date:	December
Price:	$59.95

To find out more about PlayStation, check out our WebSite address at http://www.sony.com. For game hints call 1-900-933-SONY (7669). The charge is $0.95 per minute. Callers under the age of 18 must get parental permission to call. Touch-tone phone is required. Available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. U.S. only. ESPN Extreme Games is distributed by Sony Computer Entertainment of America. Sony is a registered trademark

IF YOU FALL WHILE BLADING AT

85 MPH.

YOU COULD GRIND OFF

5 pounds of flesh.

BY THE WAY, THE GUY NEXT TO YOU THINKS YOU COULD

LOSE SOME WEIGHT.

You're choking on a large piece of dirt, you've got a boot in your face and you swear you just lost your ear. You're either dead or you're playing ESPN Extreme Games. Only on Sony PlayStation. The object of the game is simple. Bike, blade, luge or board your way through the rocky crags of Utah or Jungles of South America and four other radical courses while your opponent tries to play stickball with your skull. Simple, right? The Sony PlayStation provides 3-D graphics and superfast ultra realistic game play. So when the mountain biker kicks you in the face, you'll become road pizza in beautiful 3-D. Now, who's ready to start dieting?

PlayStation

u r n o t e

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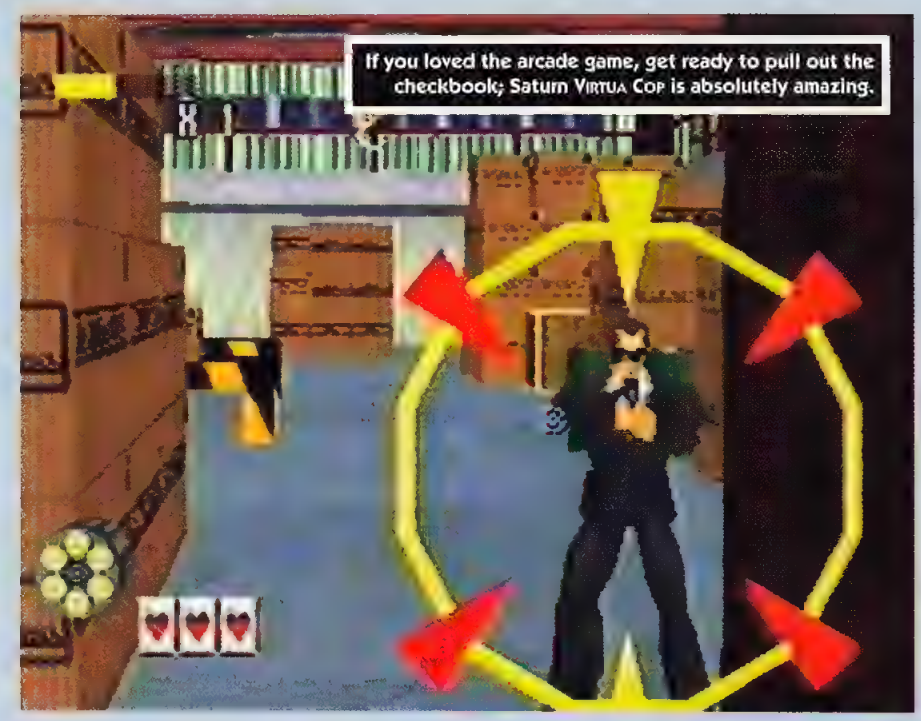
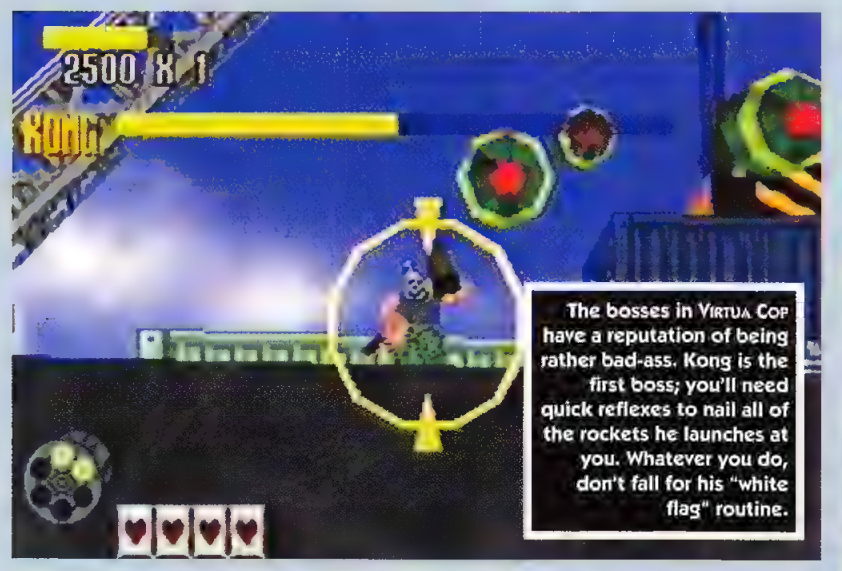
VIRTUA COP


If you loved the arcade game, get ready to pull out the checkbook; Saturn Virtua Cop is absolutely amazing.

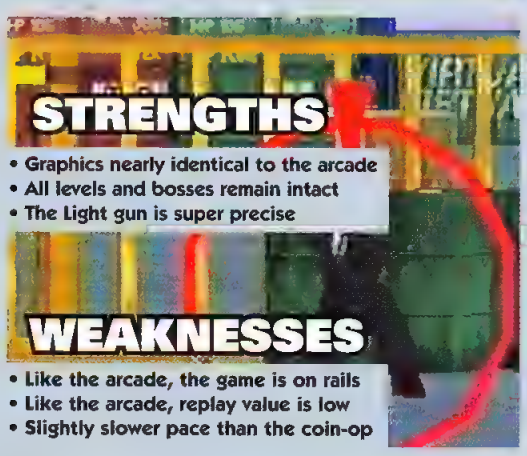
Yes! **Virtua Cop** is at last nearing completion. The AM2 development team has done a bang-up job (no pun intended) of porting over the magic of what is a fairly complex arcade game to the home—with very little lost in the translation.

In order for the conversion to work, AM2 used what it terms "smart programming". By implementing this technique, the Saturn hardware is able to handle virtually the same mathematical workload as the coin-op's Model 2 board, and the visual results are amazing. A very, very well-done job.



The bosses in Virtua Cop have a reputation of being rather bad-ass. Kong is the first boss; you'll need quick reflexes to nail all of the rockets he launches at you. Whatever you do, don't fall for his "white flag" routine.

Reloading is a pain.

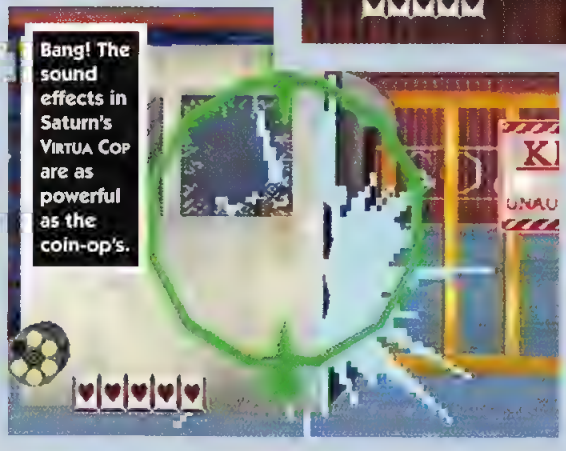


STRENGTHS

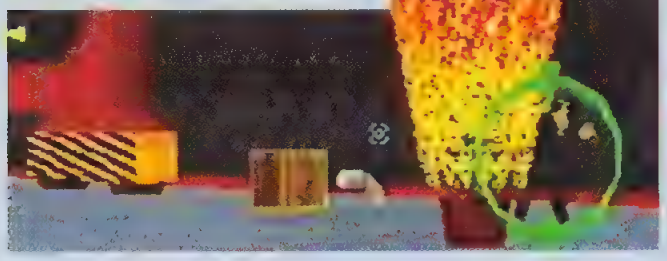
- Graphics nearly identical to the arcade
- All levels and bosses remain intact
- The Light gun is super precise

WEAKNESSES

- Like the arcade, the game is on rails
- Like the arcade, replay value is low
- Slightly slower pace than the coin-op


Bang! The sound effects in Saturn's Virtua Cop are as powerful as the coin-op's.

Don't kill any innocent sailor boys.



Stuff blows up real good.

Most of the little visual intricacies have made it to the Saturn. Stuff like logos on vans and car windshields being blown to bits.

Graphic details are kept intact.

Bad man... Must die.

There is, however, a small price to be paid for such an achievement. While the graphics themselves generate smoothly enough on-screen (Sega claims the game is exactly the same as the arcade), the overall speed is slightly slower than its coin-op counterpart. On the other hand though, only die-hard VC fanatics will probably ever notice the difference between the two in this respect.

Sound effects have been ported straight over from the original, and they come off ultra-sharp. Voices and music have also been treated with the same painstaking level of care.

The game will come packed with one brightly-colored Stunner Light gun—which not only looks exactly like the one tied to a VC arcade cabinet, but weighs about the same as well—for $79.95. Not a bad deal at all, considering the gun is set to retail on its own at around 40 bucks.

This game, along with **Virtua Fighter 2**, will undoubtedly boost sales of Sega's 32-bit machine, and with good reason: These games are a quantum-leap, technologically, ahead of previous efforts. Sega is only now beginning to realize the hardware's true potential, and that's good news for Saturn owners tired of being harassed by the PlayStation locals.

—Jim Loftus

INFO

Game:	Virtua Cop
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Game Style:	First-person Shooter
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	November
Price:	$79.95

REVOLUTION X

Operation Wolf has a lot to answer for. The old Taito shooter was really the first in an ever-growing generation of scrolling bloodthirsty shooters. **Revolution X** takes the same genre and drags it kicking and screaming into the MTV era. This game is about music, death and guns, so it should go over well with religious types in the Midwest.

Acclaim had to spend a lot of money on this little number, largely due to the fact that the soundtrack is supplied by supergroup Aerosmith. This has to rank as the biggest music/game deal since Elvis decided to supply the music for **Pac-Man**.

The rock 'n' roll element runs throughout the game, with rock 'n' roll bad guys, rock 'n' roll weapons and a generally antisocial game pattern. The plot? Completely irrelevant. Take your pick from the following: Aliens steal Earth music; zombies walk the Earth; or Wham make a comeback. It doesn't matter a hoot. As long as you remember to shoot everything, you'll be just fine.

The weapons you start out with are pretty powerful, and as you progress, they get stupidly powerful. The game uses the same engine as **Terminator 2**, and there are a lot of similarities. This is best played with a mouse or a gun on the Saturn version, since the joypad control always sucks.

—Frank O'Connor

Rock 'n' roll nuttiness abounds.

The banks of monitors give the game a real feeling of MTV chic, with a little Texas Chainsaw Massacre thrown in for good measure.

STRENGTHS

- Incredible Aerosmith tunes
- Fast action
- Bloody deaths galore

WEAKNESSES

- Very chunky graphics
- Needs a mouse or a gun
- Overly violent

INFO

Game:	Revolution X
Format:	PlayStation/Saturn
Publisher:	Acclaim
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

SOLAR ECLIPSE

Better explosions are just one of many improvements.

Lots of bad guys to kill and maim.

To appreciate fully man's place in the universe, one must first take a look at alien cultures. They tend to be sticky, tentacled, aggressive freaks and, as a result, deserve to be wiped off the face of the Galaxy. To this end you have been sent on a mission into deep space.

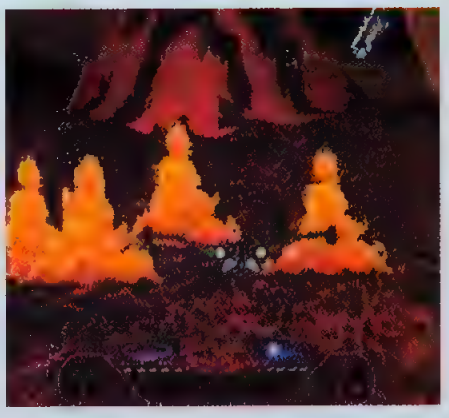
This is a sequel to Crystal Dynamics' own **Total Eclipse** and features much of the same 3-D game play seen in the first. As a game style, this is highly derivative of **Starfox**, featuring the same kinds of obstacles and aliens. You have to follow a path dictated by the game and can o slightly from it. You do have a lc freedom than in the first game, but the environment will only accommodate you so far.

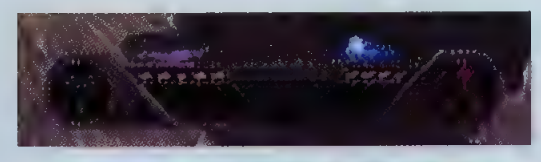
Graphically, this is a hell of an improvement over the 3DO original and the silky smooth polygons are enhanced with some nice texture-mapping. Better still, the soundtrack has been improved. While still annoying, it's a lot better than the metal guitar dirge featured in Total Eclipse.

The action is backed up by the now obligatory full-motion video cut-scene and, depending on your tolerance for that sort of thing, it seems to be pretty well done. A rather attractive lady gives you information on the attacking aliens, but it's all pretty pointless since you spend most of the time rampaging around the screen, all guns blazing.

As a sequel, **Solar Eclipse** does all the things it's supposed to do. It enhances both graphics and gameplay, while expanding upon the plot of the original game. Unfortunately, it doesn't offer anything vastly different. Still, as 3-D shooters on the Saturn go, this is definitely the pick of the litter so far, and is on par with **Panzer Dragoon**.

—Frank O'Connor





STRENGTHS

- Improved controls
- Deeper gameplay
- Sharp, smooth graphics

WEAKNESSES

- Weak level design
- Linear game path
- Confusing pyrotechnics

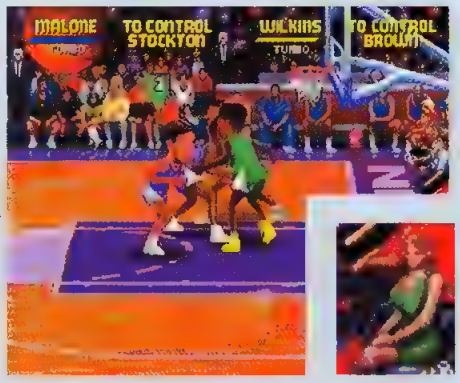
INFO

Game:	Solar Eclipse
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Crystal Dynamics
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	December
Price:	TBA

NBA JAM

Monster dunks are a big feature of NBA Jam, and are easy to do.

Some people like to watch basketball, some don't—but everyone likes to play **NBA Jam**. PlayStation and Saturn owners rejoice, for now you have the chance to play **NBA Jam Tournament Edition**, the definitive version of the game.



So what's so special about **NBA Jam**? Surely it's just another tired old basketball game with the usual multiplayer experience and the standard game play? If that's what you think, you couldn't be further from the truth. **NBA Jam Tournament Edition** applies the logic of fighting games to a fun-packed basketball sim, including special moves, hidden characters and all the stuff you'd normally associate with **Mortal Kombat**. (Not surprising, since this is the brainchild of Williams, the people who brought you **MK** in the first place.)

The action is intense from start to finish as you control one or two players in a two-on-two match. Obviously, the object of the game is to score more points than your opponent, but there are a number of sneaky ways to do it. For a start, the ref is blind, so you can get away with all kinds of pushing and shoving shenanigans. You can also utilize the turbo button to speed around the court when fully charged or develop incredible special moves as you play. Looks arcade-perfect.

—Frank O'Connor

Just about the only offense that'll actually count against you. No real rules.

STRENGTHS

- Super-fast jamming action
- Loads of characters
- Cool graphics

WEAKNESSES

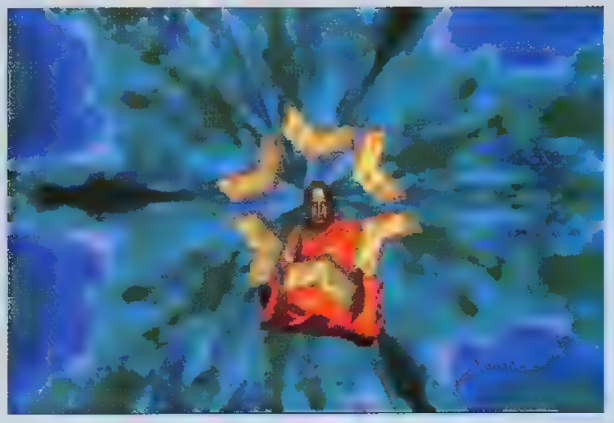
- Little variety
- Only one play mode
- Confusing controls

INFO

Game:	NBA Jam TE
Format:	PlayStation/Saturn
Publisher:	Acclaim
Game Style:	Basketball
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	October
Price:	TBA

BURN: CYCLE

Sol Cutter has a headache like you read about, largely thanks to an explosive booby trap implanted in his brain. Tylenol just won't help.



Cyberguys get all the chicks. If you're not jacked into the matrix, or surfing the neuroweb, then you might as well be a virgin. You know why? Because trawling round the Internet is cool. And it all happens in 3-D, super-fast graphic style. At least, according to Hollywood it does.

Anyone who has actually logged on to the Internet will know that it's actually a slow, boring and laborious process and chicks do not in fact dig it in the slightest. As a matter of fact, any woman with sense would steer well clear of the whole sorry mess. Which doesn't explain why Sol Cutter keeps meeting hot women. He's the star of Philips' **Burn: Cycle**, a cyberspace adventure that appeared first on Philips' own ill-fated Cd-i player. Ill-fated or not, Burn: Cycle was and remains a damned good game.

Nice full-motion video graphics portray the action as you zip around a futuristic world with an explosive device trapped in your head. The plot slowly unravels as you use a point-and-click interface to solve puzzles and find clues.

The graphic style, the music and the general atmosphere make this a wholly enjoyable experience. There are a couple of niggles that apply to most CD-based titles, such as slow access and the repetitious nature of certain tasks. The obviously attractive nature of the visuals makes these things less annoying than in other games of this ilk, but annoying they are nonetheless.

Most interestingly, this marks a departure for Philips as a hardware games manufacturer and the emergence of what could be a potentially brilliant software division. Burn: Cycle is a nice segue into the PC market and bodes very well for the company's future.

—Frank O'Connor

STRENGTHS

- Interesting plot
- Good acting!
- Decent graphics

WEAKNESSES

- Slow access
- Too much repetition
- Easy puzzles

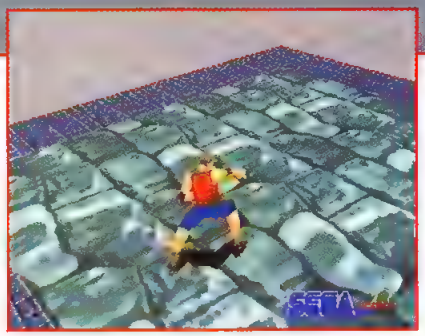
INFO

Game:	Burn: Cycle
Format:	PC CD-ROM
Publisher:	Philips
Game Style:	Action RPG
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	November
Price:	TBA

SATURN RISING

SHOCKS AND SURPRISES AT SEGA'S GAMER'S DAY

Could it be possible? Could the Saturn be the definitive system of choice this Christmas? Might the once-scorned Sega machine be as powerful, if not more so than the Sony PlayStation? At Sega's recent Gamer's Day spectacular, a couple of revelations were made that may change the course of Christmas.



Virtua Cop is the first truly perfect arcade conversion to show up on Saturn. Sega's AM2 department seems finally to have mastered the Saturn chipset, a fact that made Sega Gamer's Day all the more exciting. And Virtua Fighter 2? Oh my God, it looks too good to be true. In fact, I think I'll get myself a Saturn.

Sega's Gamers Day is a chance for the mighty Japanese corporation to show off its new product to America's press. This is when the company makes its big announcements, but this year, for the first time, Sega invited third-party software developers to bring their wares along too.

The Sega Saturn has suffered far more bad press than the PlayStation. Most of this press has been directed at either the pricing of the unit or the technical failings it was assumed to have. Sega put two powerful 32-bit Hitachi processors in the machine, but it was widely believed that the messy architecture meant that the power of these chips could never be fully realized. At Gamer's Day, Sega finally put paid to that belief.

ULTIMATE GAMER has always taken a somewhat cynical stance when it comes to Saturn technology, but I'm afraid we've been forced to eat our words. Why? In short, a little game I like to call **Virtua Fighter 2**.

This game never had the impact in the US that it did in Japan, but it still stands tall as a brilliant example of what can be achieved with a lot of polygons and a lot of hard work. The graphics are utterly stunning and have yet to be surpassed. the good (and indeed incredible) news for you Saturn owners is that the home version looks like it's going to be identical.

Sega's AM2 research department is responsible for both the arcade original and the Saturn conversion. Virtua Fighter 2 is a quantum leap from the rather disappointing conversion of **Daytona USA**.

To bring you up to date, the version of Virtua Fighter 2 currently working on the Saturn is running at a phenomenal 60 frames per second, with every single polygon intact. There will be some compromise in the final version when Sega adds the real 3-D backgrounds, including the astonishing bridge level. The characters will of course retain all their arcade moves, and rumor has it that the home version will include a couple of features not even found in the arcade. Virtua Fighter purists should note that the Saturn version will be based on the revised arcade machine, with a couple of bugs and flaws fixed.

As if that wasn't enough to whet your appetite, Sega also unveiled a final version of **Virtua Cop**, complete with the Stunner Light Gun. This, as far as we can tell, is an utterly perfect copy of the arcade machine. The fact that the gun feels so good is a great help. All the levels are there, plus all the bad guys, as well as the spectacular graphics that made the coin-op such a huge smash hit in the first place.

Sega also previewed a very early version of **Sega Rally**, the logical successor to Daytona. This time however, the clipping and frame-rate problems appear to have been solved and Sega Rally on Saturn runs as smooth as a baby's butt. Perfect scaling, convincing texture-mapping and slippery mechanics make this the hot ticket for racing fans next year. Sadly though, the resplendent features

found in that crop made the rest of Sega's games, as well as some of the third parties' games look a little weak by comparison. If it's not AM2, it's not Saturn, apparently.

That's actually a little unfair. The good news for Sega's third-party support is that AM2 is releasing its much-coveted graphics library for general use. This graphics library is a collection of objects, routines and tricks that allow Saturn developers to make the most of the machine. The new graphics library makes texture-mapping and clipping (the problem that makes polygons "pop" into the foreground) a lot easier to deal with.

PlayStation developers have always had it pretty easy in this department, but now everyone else will get a fair crack of the whip.

Although the third parties are still to unveil the fruits of their new tools, the crop that was shown at Gamer's Day was impressive nevertheless. Among the stars were games like **High Velocity** from Atlus, **Center Ring Boxing** from JVC, and **Mission: Deadly Skies**, also from JVC.

The third-party presence at this Gamer's Day was very limited. Why? Because Sega sprang the Saturn launch on everyone, including the people supposed to be developing games for the machine. As a result, only those furthest along the development trail were able to produce product they felt confident enough to show.

NEW MEMBER OF THE TRIBE

One shock move that Sega did pull off with remarkable success during Gamer's Day was the launch of the **Nomad portable Genesis unit**. You can read the in-depth scoop in our news section but suffice it to say the little beast impressed everyone who tried it. Unfortunately, the price and the short battery life of the machine make it less than the perfect unit it initially appears to be. That said, if you have a little cash, this is the best companion you could ever hope to take on a journey, and all this without trading in your Genesis carts.

One thing this release does is put the **Virtual Boy** in a great deal of jeopardy. At the same price point, with a huge catalog of games and a more immediately impressive display system, Nomad seems to have what it takes to defeat Nintendo's newie. However, many industry pundits are suggesting that there simply isn't a market for this kind of toy in the first place. So, the basic message thus far is that the Nomad is cool and Virtual Boy is well, red.

NOT QUITE DEAD YET

One thing that did become evident during Gamer's Day was the rising quality level of Sega 32X and Genesis product. Although it looks like the Neptune 32X-based console will never see the light of day, Sega had definite, if not overwhelming plans for the Genesis add-on. Perhaps the most impressive piece of software displayed for this machine was a conversion of **X-Men**. Not only did it feature amazing rendered characters from the game, but also a 3-D graphic routine that made the Saturn look stupid. Characters could walk through the scrolling landscape, battling the usual Ninja thugs, but also wander in and out of the backgrounds at will. The effect is silky smooth and highly impressive.

The much vaunted **Spider Man Web Of Fire** was there, but was hardly anything to write home about. What you could happily have written home about was the Genesis version of **Vectorman**, all but complete and resplendent in its glory. This game takes the Genesis to new technical heights, pushing the ancient machine to extremities that wouldn't have been thought possible just a few short years ago.

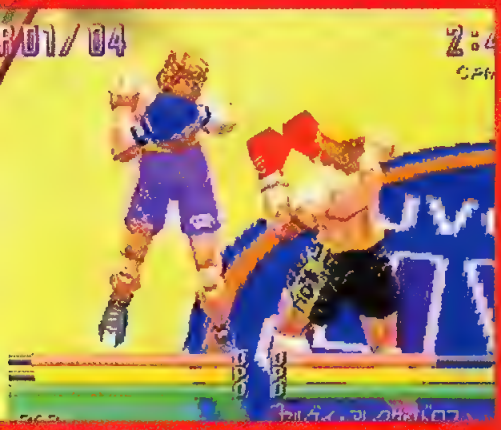
This is a trend that also overwhelmed Super NES owners. The fact that the life of the 16-bit machine is still far from over should comfort parents through those cold pre-Christmas months. Fans of **Eternal Champions** may interested to know that some of their favorite characters will be showing up in a new scrolling beat-'em-up called **XPerts**. It looks a little bit like **Double Dragon**, but with fully rendered characters and some pretty decent backdrops.

Sega's Nomad, the brand new portable Genesis, represents a true rival for Virtual Boy.

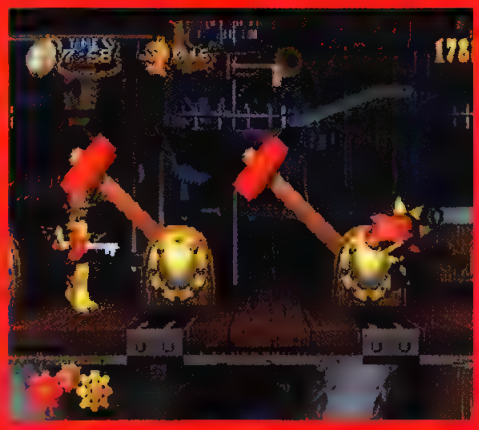
Mortal Kombat 2 for Saturn, from Acclaim is totally perfect!

High Velocity from Atlus is smoother and faster than **Daytona.**

Midget players pull laughs in **NBA Jam** for Saturn.



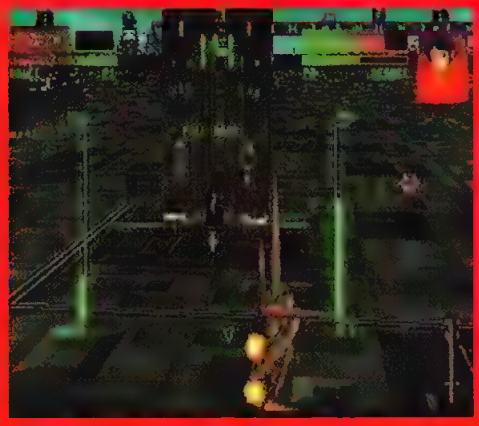
Center Ring Boxing from JVC was one of our favorites.



Sega's own **Clockwork Knight 2** featured heavily.

Acclaim had more product ready than any other third party.

XPerts for Genesis features characters from **Eternal Champions.**



Mission: Deadly Skies is JVC's Saturn answer to **Air Combat.**

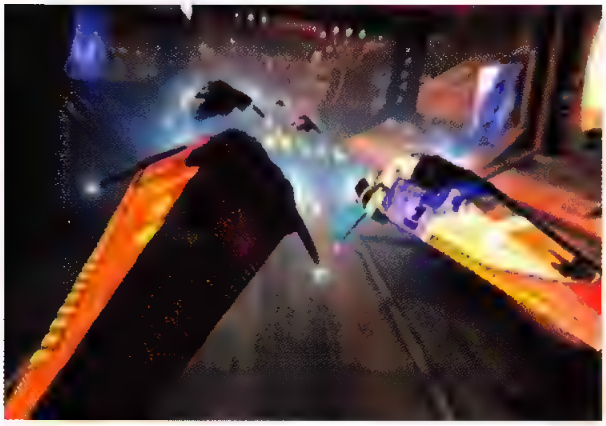
Spiderman Web Of Fire on 32X was less than impressive.

32X games are looking better than anyone ever thought they would; in some cases, close to Saturn quality.

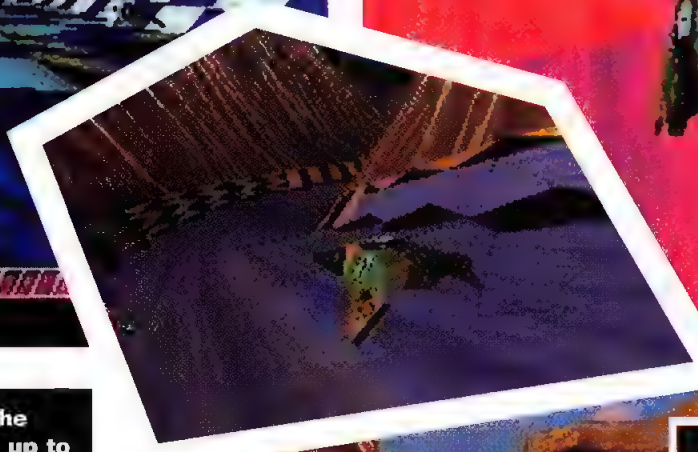
WIPEOUT

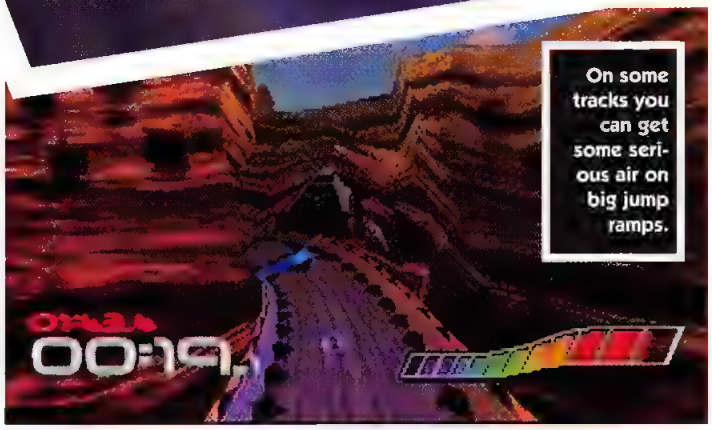
3-D tunnel action is so smooth.

The tracks are complex, with banks and steep turns as well as simple corners and bends.



Each track has its own unique hazards and features. Once learned, the tracks will remain difficult until you find out which car best suits the terrain. Finding a good balance is everything.





On some tracks you can get some serious air on big jump ramps.

Now that it has actually arrived in the office, Wipeout has not only lived up to expectations, it's exceeded them. This has to rank as one of the most technically flawless pieces of software ever produced. Sure, it's massively derivative and not exactly original, but it steals and borrows so many good elements that the result is peerless.

Super Nintendo owners will immediately spot the resemblance to **F-Zero** and they'd be right. This takes Nintendo's own classic racer and gives it a much needed boost of adrenaline and visual impact. If any game gives a fair demonstration of what can be achieved with PlayStation, it's Wipeout.

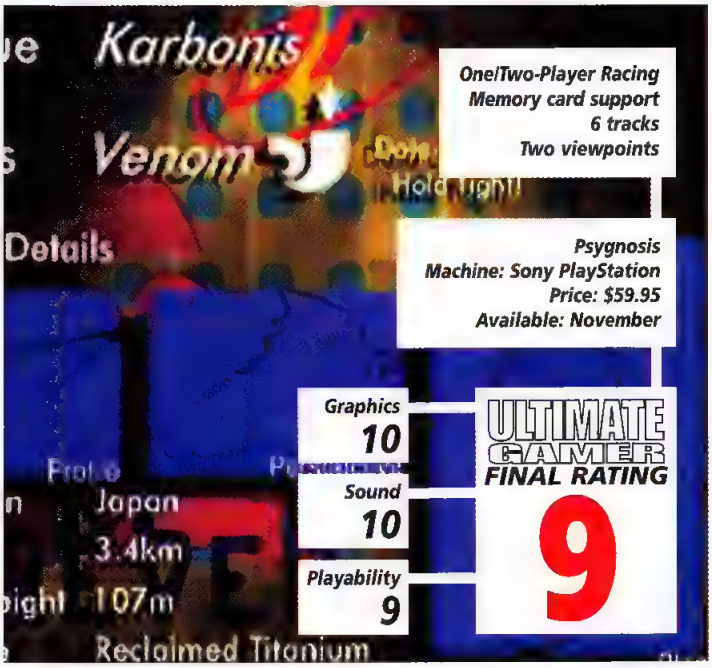
It gets better still. The gameplay is awesome. At first it seems ridiculously simple. Speed round the track, overtake the opposition and try not to crash. Soon you discover the weapon pick-ups, which endow you with features like homing missiles, mines and the incredible speed boost. Learning to use these prudently will prove to be half the battle.

The graphics fly past with speed and clarity you won't have experienced outside of an arcade. The polygon clipping is decent and the use of color superb. All

"The best reason to own a PlayStation"

this visual flair is backed up by an awesome soundtrack featuring bands like Orbital. And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, you discover the inclusion of a two-player PlayStation link-up facility. Get ahold of a pal with a PlayStation and another copy of Wipeout and you are in for the ride of your life. Simple, clean, beautiful and fun. Kind of like having a supermodel in your bathtub. Only better.

Frank O'Connor



One/Two-Player Racing
Memory card support
6 tracks
Two viewpoints

Psygnosis
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $59.95
Available: November

Graphics	10
Sound	10
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **9**

PGA TOUR GOLF '96

Too soft, you're in the sandtrap, too hard, you're over the hill.

PGA Golf on the Sega Genesis was always one of my favorite games. Imagine my delight then, when I was presented with a vastly enhanced Sony PlayStation version of the most playable golf simulation ever. PGA Golf '96 takes the same basic game play and tacks on some of the sharpest graphics and sound you could hope for.

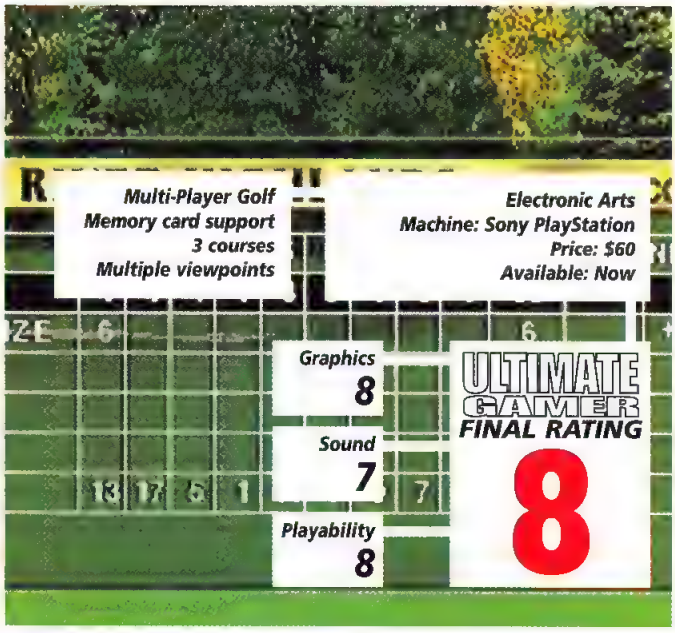
In terms of actual game play, things couldn't be much simpler. You choose the right club for the distance, hit the button, select your power setting

"Golf has never looked this good"

and boom! The ball soars off, hopefully in the direction you wanted it to. Wind, slice and hook affect the trajectory of the ball, but you'll soon get used to it. Picking the right clubs becomes of paramount importance when you're in less than perfect conditions. One minor niggle is that the selection screens are fairly tricky to get through, thanks to an unfriendly menu-driven interface. It'll take you longer to select a two-player game than actually play it.

Frank O'Connor

Gauge the swingometer.



Multi-Player Golf
Memory card support
3 courses
Multiple viewpoints

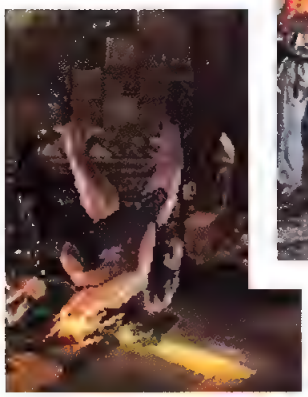
Electronic Arts
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $60
Available: Now

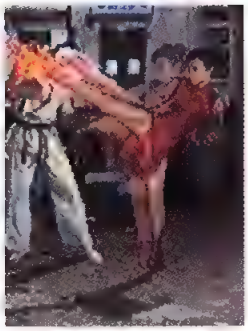
Graphics	8
Sound	7
Playability	8

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

STREET FIGHTER THE MOVIE

The sound effects are completely taken from the original SF2 arcade game.





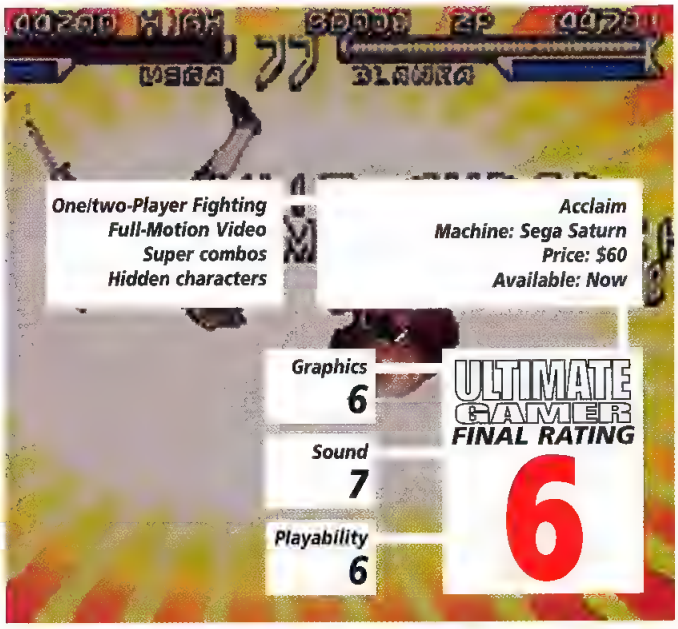
All the special moves are here.

Perhaps it's just me, but I think the Street Fighter series has gone as far as it possibly can. I also believe that the Street Fighter Movie game is a deceptive piece of flim-flam. That's not to say it's a bad game, far from it. Nope, this is a cheeky remake of the other Street Fighter games, with fancy graphics.

"Plays exactly like the other games"

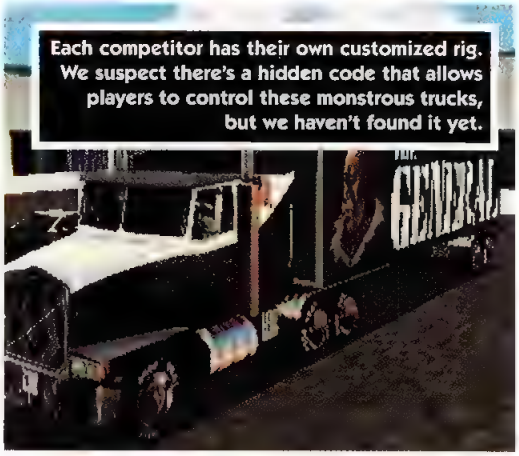
All the moves and sound effects are exactly the same as those found in previous versions. The biggest difference is the inclusion of Captain Sawada, a Japanese soldier. All the Super moves are there, as well as a couple of nice FMV sequences. The new graphics mean the gameplay and timing have been changed slightly, but since this is based on the same code as Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo, it's no surprise that it's effectively the same game. Good, but Street Fighter Legends looks better.

Frank O'Connor

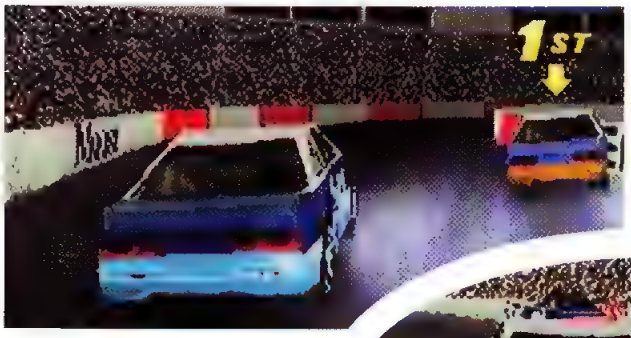


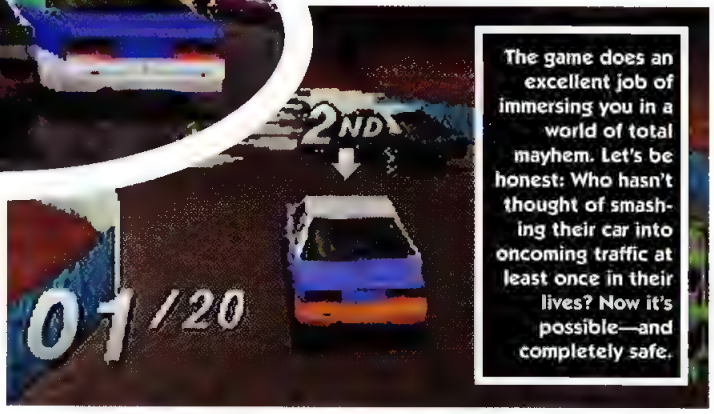
DESTRUCTION DERBY

Welcome to Destruction Derby, where the primary goal is to annihilate your enemies by ramming them at full speed. What other video game on Earth lets you cause this much chaos?



Each competitor has their own customized rig. We suspect there's a hidden code that allows players to control these monstrous trucks, but we haven't found it yet.





The game does an excellent job of immersing you in a world of total mayhem. Let's be honest: Who hasn't thought of smashing their car into oncoming traffic at least once in their lives? Now it's possible—and completely safe.

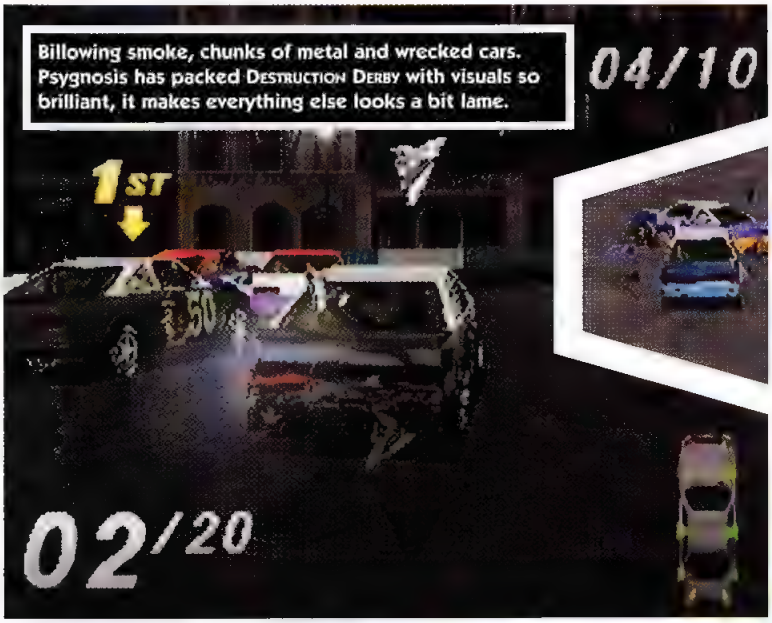
WRECKIN' RACING

DUEL

CROSS ROADS

ROOKIE

CARD



Billowing smoke, chunks of metal and wrecked cars. Psygnosis has packed DESTRUCTION DERBY with visuals so brilliant, it makes everything else looks a bit lame.

Say hello to your brand-new, shiny race car.

Now say hello to some serious repair bills.

Thanks to the utter genius that is Psygnosis, it is now possible to commit vehicular manslaughter and not go to prison. Destruction Derby has arrived and to be honest, I don't know if driving games will ever be the same again.

The E³ show back in May debuted only a handful of "I've absolutely gotta have this" games, one of which was this little marvel. The minute I caught the video monitor filled with never-before-attempted scenes of mass destruction, I knew that it was something unique. Now that the final version is

"Check your drawers on this one."

complete, I gotta say that almost all my hopes for the game have been fulfilled.

The game involves traditional demolition derby-style action; you know, the type of recreational activity primarily associated with trailer-trash hicks from Omaha, Nebraska. But who doesn't enjoy a heaping dose of ultra-violence every now and then? You select your car, the location at which to race/destroy, and you're off.

Players wanting a true arcade-style experience in the home need to look no further than DD. All you need to get started is two PlayStations, two televisions and two copies of the game, along with the necessary link-cable. (We never said it was gonna come cheap or easy.) With everything in place, this delivers independent viewpoints for each driver on separate monitors and should impress the hell out of any self-respecting gamer in the neighborhood. Each player can then select from a variety of viewpoints, similar to drivers like **Ridge Racer** and **Daytona**.

It's nice to know that finally someone has the balls to deliver such a magnificent, disturbingly violent game. Thanks, Psygnosis.

Jim Loftus

One/Two-Player Racing
Memory card support
Link-up Capability
Multiple viewpoints

Psygnosis
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $TBA
Available: Now

Graphics	10
Sound	10
Playability	8

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **9**

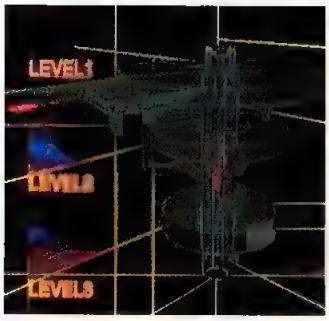
PHILOSOMA

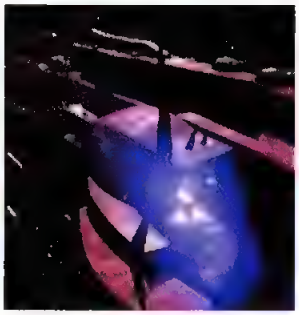
The pace can get pretty hectic in PHILOSOMA. Save your smart bombs to get you out of tight spots.

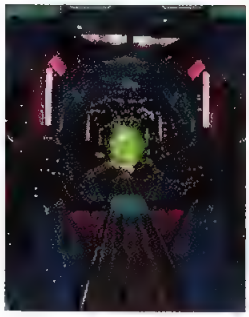
Just one of the dozens and dozens of awesome SGI-rendered cinema scenes.

Boom.

Yeah, eat one of these, you jerk!

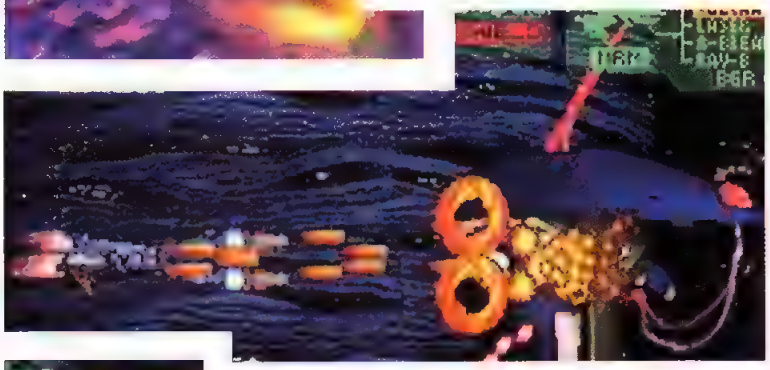


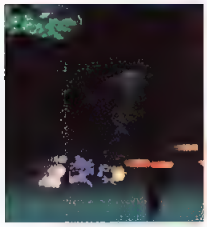


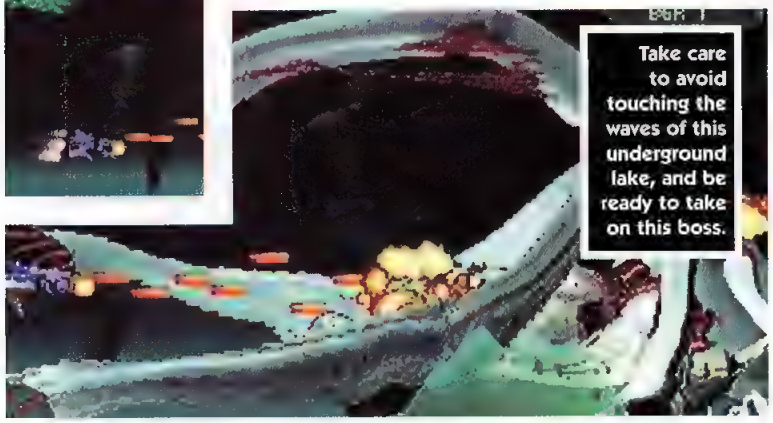


Blow up this gelatinous blob of living tissue.

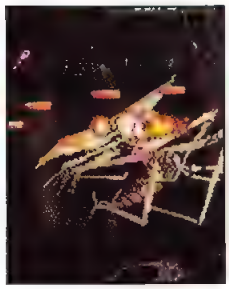
This painful-looking protuberance scared us the most.







Take care to avoid touching the waves of this underground lake, and be ready to take on this boss.



Shooters: Possibly, the most overdone genre ever. For me to really dig a shooter these days, it had better be damn good, especially if it's for one of the new super systems. And while it may not exactly set the whole world ablaze, Philosoma for the PlayStation is pretty cool.

For one thing, the cinemas are absolutely unbelievable. I have never, and I mean **never**, seen a more impressive-looking bunch of SGI-rendered cinemas in my life. SCE must've poured ungodly amounts of time and money into the between-level scenes alone. Gorgeous stuff. But let's get back to the real issue at hand—how's the actual game? Well, I'm pleased to report that although Philosoma doesn't break much new ground playability-wise, what it does do is deliver a fairly good dose of fun.

"Kill 'em all!"

The game is a mix of side- and vertical-scrolling action, with the emphasis, of course, on the complete and utter destruction of anything that moves. That's a good thing. Nothing beats pounding the living daylights out of something after a hard day at the office. (wait a minute, that **is** our hard day at the office!) For the most part, the enemies in Philosoma won't win any awards for originality, but there are a few eye-openers. Parallax scrolling is well done throughout most of the game however, I must tell you that as a PlayStation owner, I found myself asking one or two questions. Questions such as, "Why doesn't this look better?" and, "Where is the depth of play?" This is basically a meat-and-potatoes shooter with a few occasional surprises thrown in for good measure. Keep that in mind, and you won't be disappointed in the slightest.

Jim Loftus

One-Player Shooter
Memory card support
12 levels
Multiple weapons

Sony Computer Entertainment
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $Import
Available: TBA

Graphics	6
Sound	6
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

POWER PRO BASEBALL

There's not too much to say, except that this is as wacky as baseball ever gets.

Baseball has never been a sport with a very serious reputation. Too many all-time greats with beer bellies and wife-beating problems for that. But Konami has gone too far with its latest foray into the sport. This is baseball for loonies.

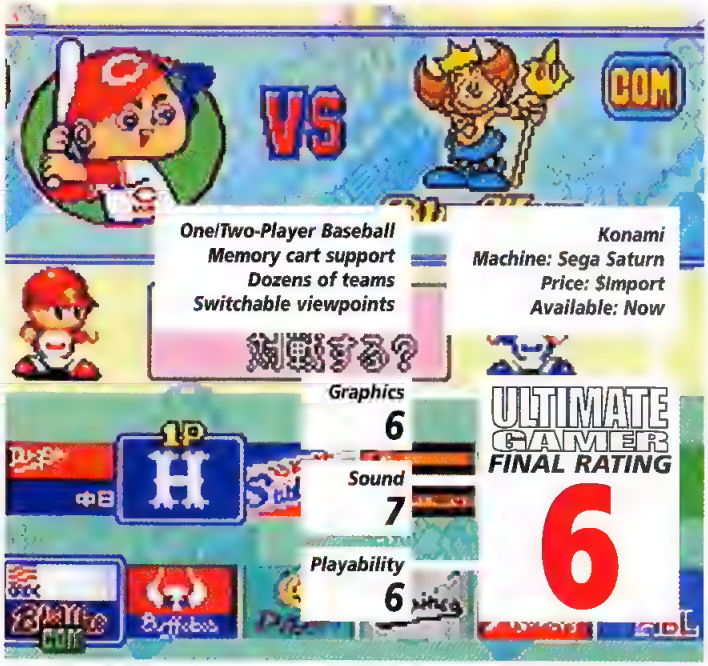
Of course there are serious gameplay issues at stake. Konami appears to have found the winning for-

"Well I think it's funny, anyway"

mula though, and it's a formula that has been the staple of baseball games since gaming began. Wait for the pitch and hit it, or pitch yourself and curve the ball.

The wacky graphics and sound add charm to what could otherwise have been a very repetitive experience, and this is one of those games that definitely appeals to a younger audience. Don't be surprised if you find yourself having just one more try, or giggling when you hit a home run.

Frank O'Connor



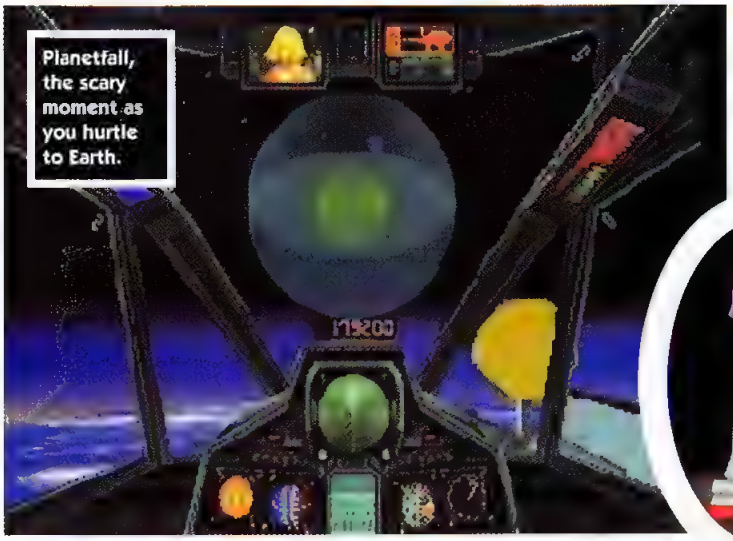
One/Two-Player Baseball
Memory cart support
Dozens of teams
Switchable viewpoints

Konami
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $Import
Available: Now

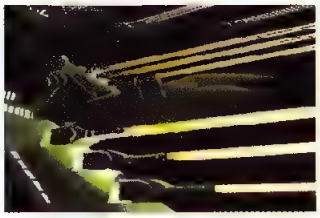
Graphics 6
Sound 7
Playability 6

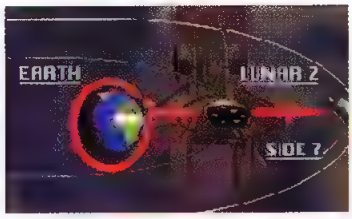
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING
6

GUNDAM


Planetfall, the scary moment as you hurtle to Earth.

Your Gundam Robot is an awe-inspiring sight. 50 feet tall, made of titanium and simply bristling with weapons.



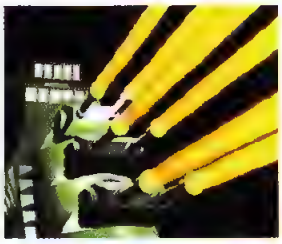


Gundam, like Godzilla and Ultraman, is one of those Japanese phenomena that's garnered a huge cult following in the USA. The PlayStation incarnation of the Gundam game series is the most visually impressive to date. Unfortunately, it also has to rank as one of the worst games on the PlayStation so far.

"Great big robots, teeny weeny game"

It's basically a shoot- and hack-'em-up set in an unconvincing, slightly choppy 3-D environment. The music, sounds and graphics are all very professional, but the simplistic nature of the gameplay soon becomes tiring and the lack of variety is unforgivable. Gundam fans will get a kick out of the attention to detail and the highly realistic Gundam robots, but anyone looking for a good blast will be disappointed. May not even see a release in the US.

Frank O'Connor



One-Player Shooter
Memory card support
Varying scenarios
Multiple viewpoints

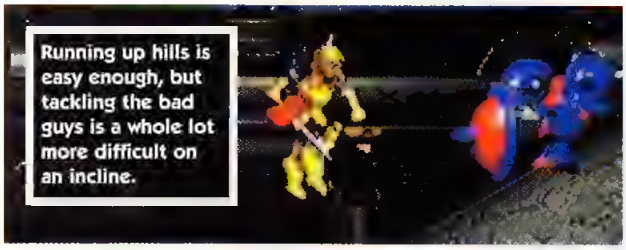
Bandai
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $import
Available: Now

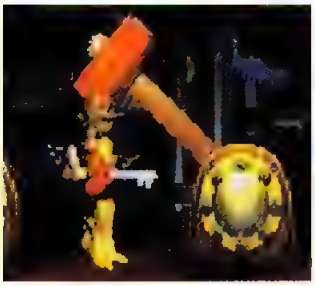
Graphics	7
Sound	6
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **5**

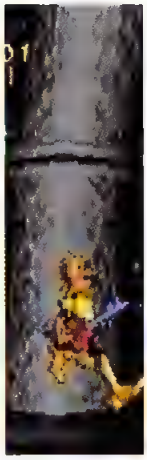
CLOCKWORK KNIGHT 2

The 3-D parallax of the first game is still here, but slightly improved.


Running up hills is easy enough, but tackling the bad guys is a whole lot more difficult on an incline.



Backgrounds are more varied this time around.



Pepperouchau, the hero of the piece, has a whole new contingent of enemies to deal with. Clever, well animated and highly cute.

Sega is very guilty of this: Repeating the same old format with slight improvements but with no substantial differences. The first Clockwork Knight game looked and played well enough, but it didn't have too many new ideas. The same description can be applied to this sequel, but with an added criticism. It's almost identical to the first game. I mean, you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference on most levels.

"More of the same old same old"

Sega has tried a few new things. On one level, your character is given a horse to ride around on. This changes the way the game plays, but not enough to thrill and excite you. Another addition is the multiple-angled levels. It's difficult to describe, but when you reach the "end" of some levels, the whole screen flips around, allowing you to walk in a perpendicular direction.

The puzzles are trickier too. Some levels require a good deal of thought. Making bad decisions early on with regards to switches could land you in a lot of trouble later in the level. But since this is a platform game, there's only so far you can go in the wrong direction.

Many of these criticisms of Clockwork Knight 2 could be applied to any platform game. This is a good example of the genre, but it simply doesn't contain anything worth writing home about. And you can't help but feel a little cheated. The levels available in this version would have been better had they been used as an extension of the first (short) **Pepperouchau** game. All in all, decent, but not quite amazing.

Frank O'Connor

One-Player Platform
Eight levels
Hidden rooms
3-D parallax

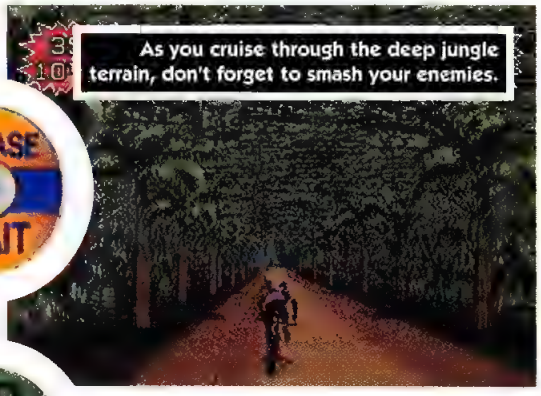
Sega Of America
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: STBA
Available: November

Graphics	8
Sound	8
Playability	7

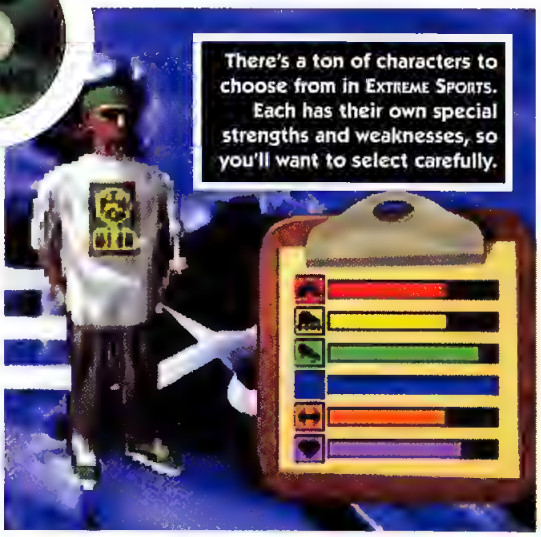
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

EXTREME SPORTS

South America is one of the more exciting areas to race. This rickety rope bridge leads to the finish line.



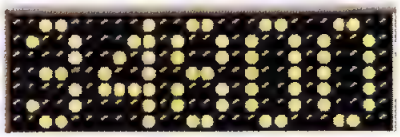
As you cruise through the deep jungle terrain, don't forget to smash your enemies.

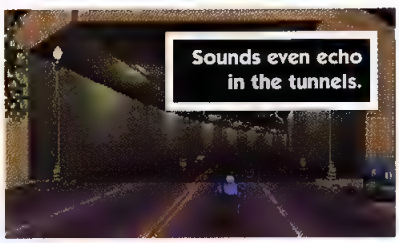


There's a ton of characters to choose from in EXTREME SPORTS. Each has their own special strengths and weaknesses, so you'll want to select carefully.

The game gives you a fairly accurate sense of terrain; you can almost feel the strain while climbing hills.

The attention to detail on the backgrounds extends to laundry hanging on lines across the streets of Italy.




Sounds even echo in the tunnels.

Yes, it does look an awful lot like Road Rash and I'll tell you something else; it plays an awful lot like Road Rash too. Sony has "borrowed" a bunch of ideas from Electronic Arts' classic racer and given them the PlayStation treatment. This makes ESPN Extreme Sports a real alternative to Ridge Racer and certainly this contains a lot more in terms of simple variety.

"Road Rash with a much needed boost"

This is Sony Electronic Publishing's first PlayStation outing and technically, it's quite a marvel. Ridge Racer-quality graphics with a split-screen mode, loads of onscreen action and plenty of tracks and vehicles.

The game is based on ESPN's **Extreme Games** series, where vaguely psychotic contestants ride around on silly vehicles at tremendous speeds. Yes, these events do often end in tragedy, or at least embarrassment, but it's all good clean fun.

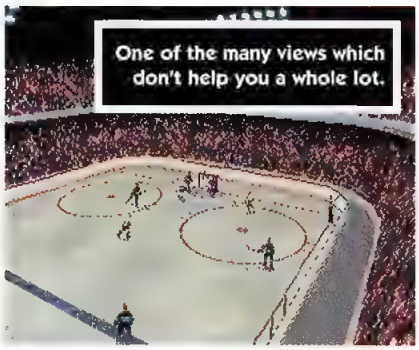
The PlayStation interpretation of events is akin to a driving game with added violence. Accelerate, brake, dodge obstacles and batter your opponents to the ground. Each character is armed with a formidable array of kicks or punches (à la Road Rash) and must on occasion resort to cheating in order to win a race.

The music, graphics and control interface simply stink of high quality and high production values. Someone, somewhere at Sony cared about this one and made it the way it is.

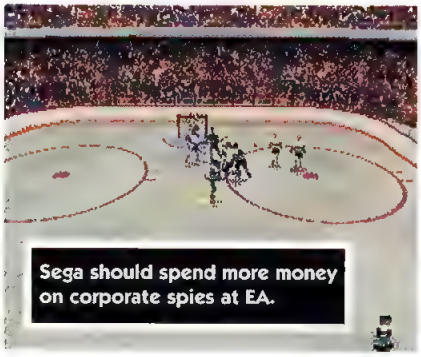
The game is far from perfect, however. For example, the vehicles all handle in a very similar way. The tracks could have been more complex, but all in all, this is a fine, fine racing game.

Frank O'Connor

NHL ALL STAR HOCKEY


One of the many views which don't help you a whole lot.

If there's one thing I don't need to see, it's another French-Canadian coach.


Sega should spend more money on corporate spies at EA.

Watch the lights flash and hear the horn wail.

More boring ice-scapades.

Hockey fans should be disappointed, if not angry. Sega has been pumping up this game since day one. It talked about all of the camera angles, the playability and its 3-D playing surface. Sega had us fooled.

As I sit here writing this review, I still can't believe how poorly done **NHL All-Star Hockey** is. Sure, it has a bazillion camera angles to view the game from. What they fail to tell you, though, is that not one of them is worth a damn. They're either at too awkward an angle to play from, or too far away from the playing surface, making it hard to see what's going on.

"I feel cheated!"

Not helping the situation is the fact that the graphics are terrible. The puck looks like a triangle, for one. If you're the developer of a hockey game and you can't even get the look of the puck right, you shouldn't have a job. Also, the look of the players is way too chunky for a 32-bit system.

Role-playing was another facet that they added to this porkchop to make it look more enticing to the consumer. Unfortunately, this too was botched. What should have been a revolutionary feature in a sports game ended up to be nothing more than clutter at the options screen. I wanted to be able to view the game, as the goalie, from a first-person perspective. Instead, I was treated to an obstructed view from behind the net, where I couldn't have told you what was going on.

It's sad to say that NHL All-Star Hockey isn't even in the same league as its 16-bit peer, **NHL '96**. Better luck next time, Sega.

Geoff Higgins

Multi-Player
Position role-playing
Fully licensed
12 Viewpoints

Sega Sports
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $60
Available: Now

Graphics	6
Sound	7
Playability	6

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **6**

LAST GLADIATOR

You can deliberately tilt the table to try and move a trapped ball, but don't do it too much or you'll be kicked out of the game.

There are a total of four tables.

Pinball games usually don't work on video game systems. It seems a little dumb to spend upwards of 60 bucks on a pinball game you might only play a few times in an

"One of the best pinball sims ever"

arcade. Sometimes though, a pinball game comes along and makes the whole genre worthwhile. **Last Gladiator** is one such game.

The tables feature all the usual stuff, like ramps, bumpers, rails and so forth, but the sharp graphics, cool music and supreme ball movement make this more than the average pinball sim. The ball movement is so cool, you'll think you're actually there.

Frank O'Connor

One-/two-player Pinball
Four tables
Tilt feature
3-D perspective

Namco Hometek (425) 696-1688
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $import
Available: Now

Graphics	8
Sound	7
Playability	8

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

FANTASTIC PINBALL

These guys represent the ball.

It's all about points, but there are some boss monsters.

Pinball is a game that has been making a slow comeback for a number of years. It's a little more acceptable in social circles than video gaming, for no reason we can think of. And pinball comes in many strange forms.

"Pinball for people who take acid"

This incarnation is pretty conventional, and borrows a lot of elements from games like **Devil's Crush**. There is a little more in here to hold your interest, but special weapons and boss monsters may not be your cup of tea. A good, solid little game.

Frank O'Connor

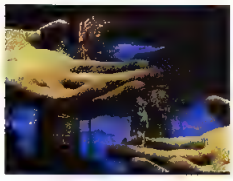
One-Player Pinball
Memory card support
3 characters
Scaling table

Sony
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $Import
Available: Now

Graphics	8
Sound	5
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

BATTLE MONSTERS



The screen, much like KILLER INSTINCT, will expand to reveal more play area.

Monsters have been making a lot of noise in the beat-'em-up world. This trend was started by SNK's King of the Monsters, and followed up by arcade smash Primal Rage. The attraction of 60-foot-tall creatures slugging it out is obvious, but there have been much better examples of the genre.

The predictably titled **Battle Monsters** is weak in a lot of respects, not least of which is the monotonous and redundant gameplay. Think of a special move from a fighting game and you can

"A reasonably boring fighter"

bet it's here, unchanged and slightly poorer in appearance. The graphics are quite drab, leaving lots to the imagination, although the scaling of backgrounds and sprites is very smooth.

There aren't too many fighting games on the Saturn, but both **Mortal Kombat 2** and **Street Fighter: The Movie** are much, much better than this. Our advice? Avoid it and don't be taken in by the flashy graphics.

Frank O'Connor

The scaling sprites and backgrounds add a lot to what is otherwise a visually weak title.

One/two-Player Fighting
Scaling backgrounds
Secret moves
Hidden characters

Sega (Japan)
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $Import
Available: Now

Graphics	6
Sound	6
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **5**

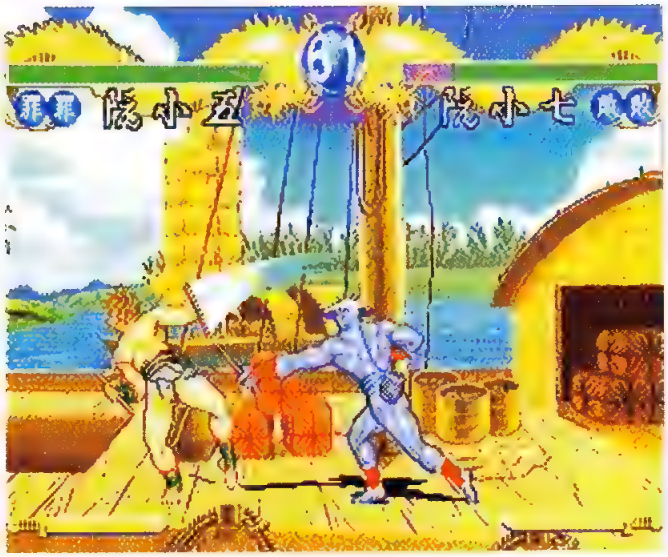
DARK LEGEND

Take the DARK LEGEND quiz!
1. Action? Yes.
2. Blood? Yes.
3. Speedy control? No.

Put the enemy's family jewels out of commission.

There are some decent special moves in the game.

Some of the characters in DARK LEGEND look pretty intimidating.



Data East has come up with a strange combination on this one. Dark Legend has some worthwhile characteristics, but falls way short in providing true fighting-game fanatics much more than mediocrity.

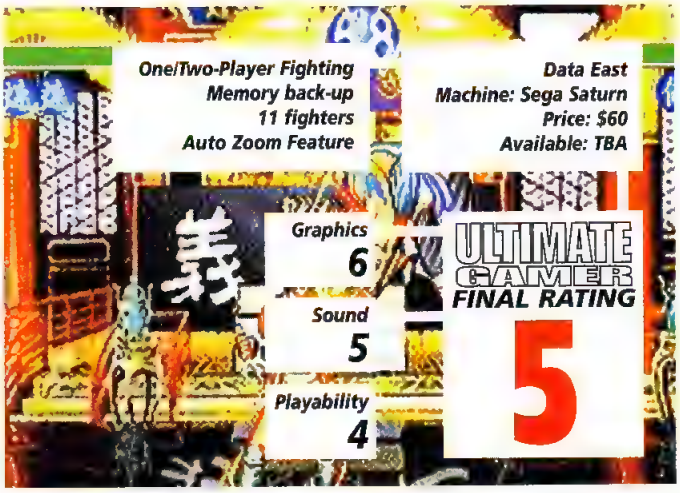
"Shades of Neo Geo."

They tried. They really did. Heavily influenced by the Neo•Geo library of fighting titles, Data East has assembled a game that contains many nice traits. Dark Legend's main problem lies with its lack of quickness; it's just not—what I like to refer to as—"connected". Multi-hits come off at a disappointingly slow rate of speed and make you feel as if you're on Prozac.

The game's graphics are every bit as colorful as say, **Savage Reign**'s, but there is a serious lack of parallax and that detracts from its overall visual appeal. The ground surfaces don't shift in relation to where the fighters are located on-screen, either; they're simply dated and flat-looking.

When everything's said and done, Dark Legend is just not worth much more than a weekend rental.

Jim Loftus



One/Two-Player Fighting
Memory back-up
11 fighters
Auto Zoom Feature

Data East
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $60
Available: TBA

Graphics	6
Sound	5
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **5**

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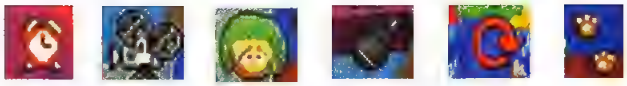
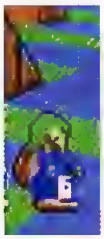
LEMMINGS 3D

It's the same basic principle, but in a 3-D environment. And all the harder for it.

Freeze 'em, jump 'em, float 'em, walk 'em, and most of all, kill 'em. They're Lemmings. They have to die.

Ow my brain hurts.





Lemmings is one of those games that brings out a twisted streak in the most reasonable person. You know you're supposed to save the Lemmings, but sometimes it's fun to watch them die. Ha. Lemmings 3D lets you watch them die in glorious rendered, polygon form. And it's hard to play.

"For Samaritans with gigantic brains"

Very hard in fact. Lemmings 3D has the same basic premise and control system as its 2-D predecessor, but this time you have an extra dimension to worry about. You can still look around and plan your route to save the lemmings, and there's a bunch of new powers at your disposal. However, only nuclear scientists of some note will be able to play this first time. But give it a few days and you'll have an immersive, satisfying and original experience.

Frank O'Connor

One-Player Puzzle
Memory card support
All new Lemmings
Multiple viewpoints

Psygnosis
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $60
Available: Now

Graphics	7
Sound	6
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

NOVASTORM

The first level boss is pretty impressive-looking. Unfortunately, like the rest of the game, it also looks like movie footage.

Novastorm is a first-person shooter with good intentions. The visuals are a marriage of FMV and real-time sprites and initially, it looks sweet.

With Novastorm, Psygnosis attempted to perfect the technique of pasting sprites onto FMV backgrounds. The experiment has failed. The foreground graphics don't jive with the scenery; they remind me of those Colorforms sets I had as a kid. The game's also all on rails. With the PlayStation's mind-boggling potential for generating 3-D, go-where-you-want-to worlds, this **Microcosm**-

"Hey, kids, look! It's Colorforms!"

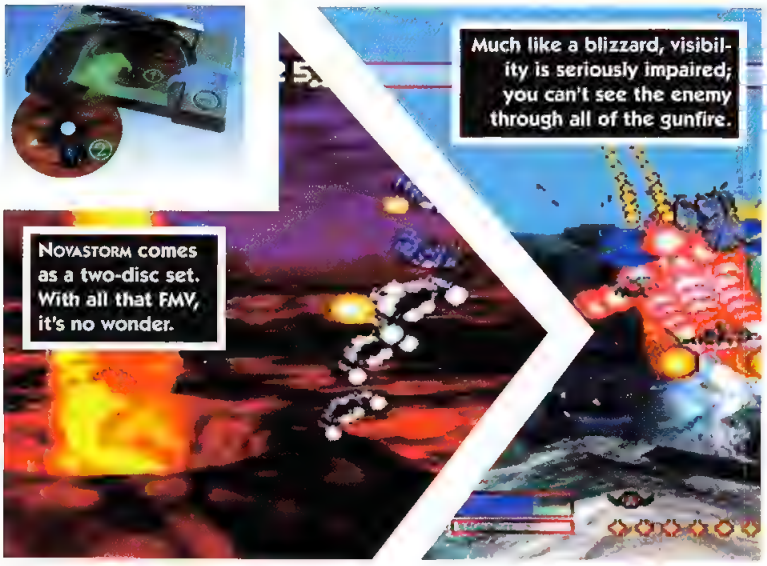
Sewer Shark mentality has to be abandoned.

Novastorm is a very cluttered game. It's often very difficult to see where enemies are due to the annoying overly-opaque explosions and your very own power-up weapons.

For shooter fans, it looks like **Raiden** will have to do until something better comes along. Knowing the PlayStation, that shouldn't take too long.

Jim Loftus

The cinemas are beautifully rendered.



Much like a blizzard, visibility is seriously impaired; you can't see the enemy through all of the gunfire.

NOVASTORM comes as a two-disc set. With all that FMV, it's no wonder.

One-Player Shooter
FMV cinemas
Memory card support
Two-disc set

Psygnosis
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $60
Available: Now

Graphics	7
Sound	6
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **5**

Made like a motion picture, designed like your imagination

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BEHIND THE SCENES OF
MIRAGE
THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GAME

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VR
GO BEYOND THE TECHNOLOGICAL
BARRIER WITH QUICKTIME VR

MIRAGE

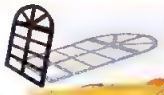
You against your imagination!

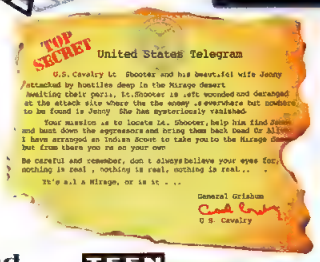
Post Production, Digital Sound and Special FX
recorded at Heaven International Studios
Game Concept and Design: Mindfields
Surrealistic Graphics: The dream designers
Art Department: Samora Saint

Directed by Phillip Christian
Original Score by Saint

the dream designers ©1994

the Big Picture
multimedia presentation
the Big Picture ©1994




TOP SECRET United States Telegram

U.S. Cavalry Lt Shooter and his beautiful wife Jenny attacked by hostiles deep in the Mirage desert
Awaiting their parts, Lt.Shooter is left wounded and deranged at the attack site where the the enemy is everywhere but nowhere to be found is Jenny She has mysteriously vanished

Your mission is to locate Lt. Shooter, help him find Jenny and hunt down the aggressors and bring them back Dead Or Alive. I have arranged an Indian Scout to take you to the Mirage desert but from there you re on your own

Be careful and remember, don t always believe your eyes for nothing is real , nothing is real, nothing is real..

It's a.l a Mirage, or is it . ..

General Grisham
U S Cavalry

Recorded in Digital 3D Dimensional Sound

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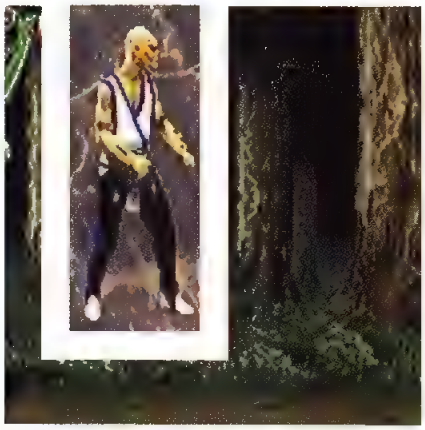
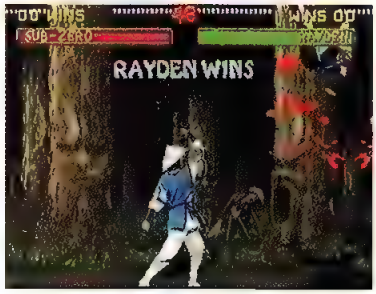
MORTAL KOMBAT 2

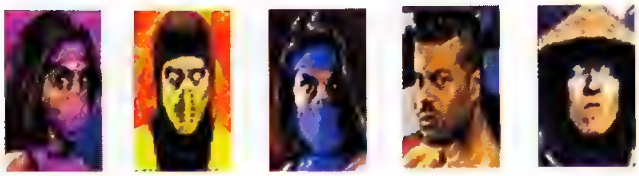




Rayden has an unfair advantage in that he's actually the God of Thunder.

Seeing the movie helps you identify with the characters.

Shang Tsung unleashes a skull fireball at pretty boy Johnny Cage, Pah! Movie stars think they're so cool.



No game in the history of the business has created quite as big a stir as Mortal Kombat 2. Even its predecessor, MK1, didn't have the same kind of impact. The greatest reason for the game's success is the sheer brutality of the proceedings. In a climate of sanitized anti-violence, Mortal Kombat came as a refreshing breath of foul-smelling, blood-tainted air. Mortal Kombat 2 is without doubt the most gruesome, bloody, violent experience available to gamers. And it's a pretty cool game to boot.

The gameplay is highly derivative of all the fighting games you've ever see, but it does have a few features you'll only ever find in the Mortal Kombat series. These include the now-famous fatalities, babalities and friendship moves. All of these special moves are utterly useless in the course of the game,

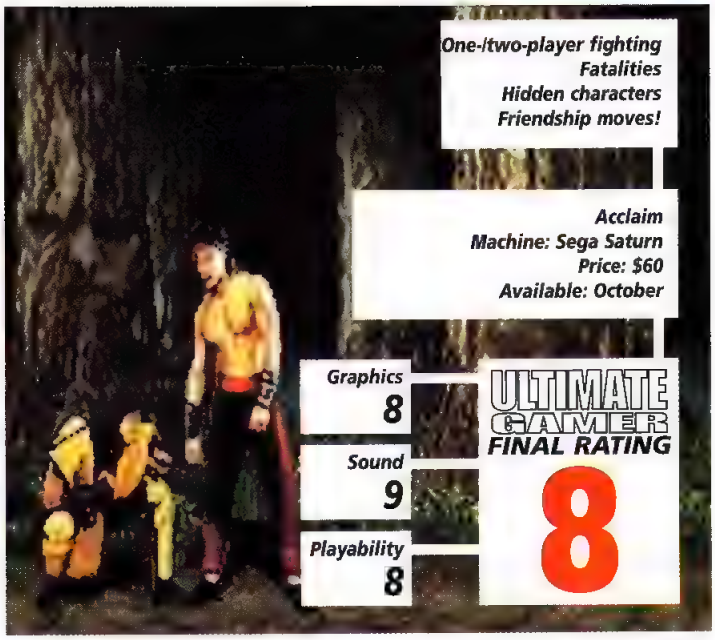
"The definitive version of Mortal Kombat 2"

but when you beat an opponent, it's a good chance to show off your memory, reflex and skill. As a fighting game, Mortal Kombat has a couple of major flaws. the greatest of these is the similarity between characters. Almost all the characters behave in exactly the same way during conventional fighting. they have the same arsenal of kicks and punches and their only real differences are in their special moves.

As with most fighting games, choosing the right character for you is half the battle. Unfortunately, in Mortal Kombat 2, the characters are pretty unbalanced when it comes to their specialties. There are a couple of characters who are simply too powerful and a couple of others who are too weak.

That said, it's an enjoyable and atmospheric game with more hidden features than any other fighting game. The Saturn conversion is quite simply brilliant. It looks, plays and sounds exactly like the original arcade game and will have fans of the coin-op in conniptions of glee. A couple of minor niggles include the slow CD access, but if you get used to it, you won't even notice. A sterling conversion of one of the better games to emerge in the '90s and a sound Saturn start for Acclaim.

Frank O'Connor



One-/two-player fighting
Fatalities
Hidden characters
Friendship moves!

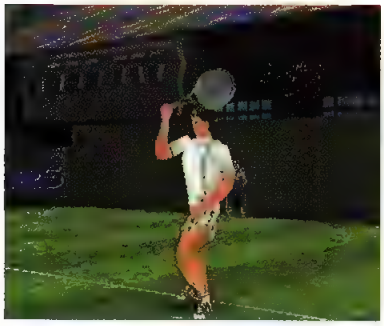
Acclaim
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $60
Available: October

Graphics	8
Sound	9
Playability	8

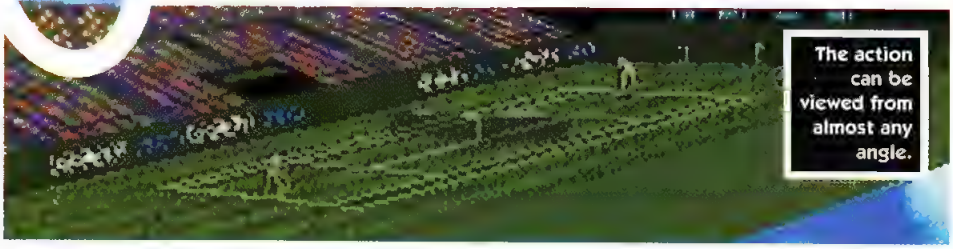
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

POWER SERVE

Each player has a different set of statistics relating to speed, power and accuracy. Choosing the right player is the most important factor in the game. Do it wrong and you're screwed.



The three-quarter view is the most conventional and the most effective.



The action can be viewed from almost any angle.

The players are all based loosely on real tennis personalities. This fellow in particular is a dead ringer for "crazy" tennis star Andre Agassi. Unfortunately, nobody bothered to obtain the rights to use the real players' names, so you put up with pseudonyms like "Hagissy" and "Sumprass" instead. Wacky, zany.

Serving is a lot easier than it looks. Good timing is needed.

The PlayStation needs sports games in order to stand a fair chance against the sports-intensive Sega Saturn. Ocean's Power Serve Tennis is a viable contender, but perhaps not the perfect simulation of the sport. It suffers from a number of minor problems which serve to spoil an otherwise brilliant game.

On the plus side, Power Serve features character sprites which would make the **Tekken** programmers stop for a second look. Huge, fully texture-mapped boys and girls who go through their tennis moves with uncanny realism. The sound effects are all real samples and so, on first appearances, it looks and sounds just about perfect.

The game gives you an almost silly number of

"Looks a bit better than it plays"

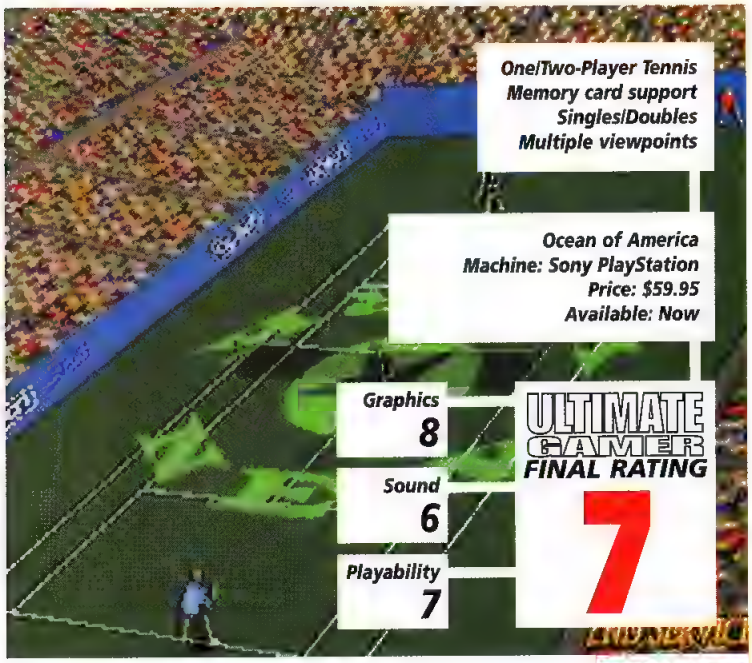
options, allowing you to view the court from literally any angle, even underneath the court. In fact, our intrepid reviewer Jim Loftus spent an awful long time trying to look up one of the girl player's skirt.

When you've stopped trying to get cheap thrills from the girl sprites, you'll discover a couple of problems with the gameplay. For a start, it's nigh-on impossible to play the game from certain "camera" angles, and even when you find your perfect view, you'll still have some problems.

Serving is easy, but return shots are limited by the character's speed of response. This game is nowhere near as forgiving as **Super Tennis**, for example. Actually, on that note, tennis fans might be interested to know that the guys who brought you Super Tennis on the Super NES, are hard at work finishing a PlayStation tennis title. It may well be that Sony will decide to release that under its own label in the US.

As it stands, Power Serve Tennis is an interesting, impressive and ultimately difficult simulation of a weird sport. Quite what the market for Tennis games is, we just don't know, but this is a noble and worthy effort. With a little tweaking and an easier difficulty grading, this could have been fantastic.

Frank O'Connor



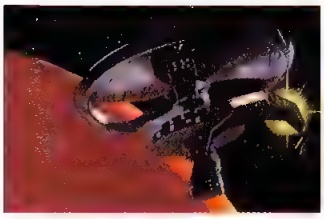
One/Two-Player Tennis
Memory card support
Singles/Doubles
Multiple viewpoints

Ocean of America
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $59.95
Available: Now

Graphics	8
Sound	6
Playability	7

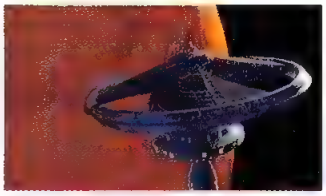
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

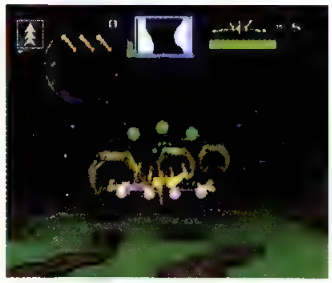
TOTAL ECLIPSE



Hmm. Rendered full-motion video sequences. What a surprise—I don't think.

The tunnel sequences are the most challenging.





As the 3DO version of TOTAL ECLIPSE passes into the annals of gaming history, so the PlayStation version arrives with more of a whimper than a bang. Although this version has the addition of the "turbo" moniker, it hardly expands on the original concept.

"Much better than the 3DO version"

Both graphics and controls have been improved and updated, making this an easier and more enjoyable game-play experience. The frame rate has been increased to provide smoother images, and the sprite scaling is a hell of a lot more convincing than before. Some of the the 3DO version's problems still remain, such as confusing graphics and a stupid difficulty curve, but all in all, this is a fine little STARFOX-type shooter.

Frank O'Connor

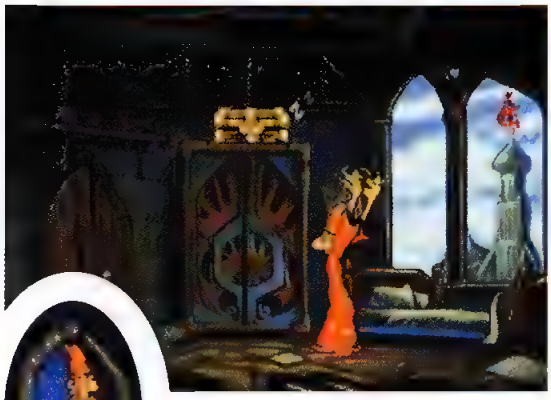
One-Player Shooter
Memory card support
FMV intros
Vile alien scum

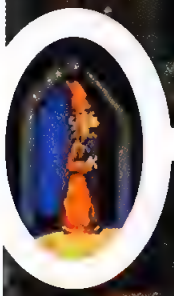
Crystal Dynamics
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $60
Available: Now

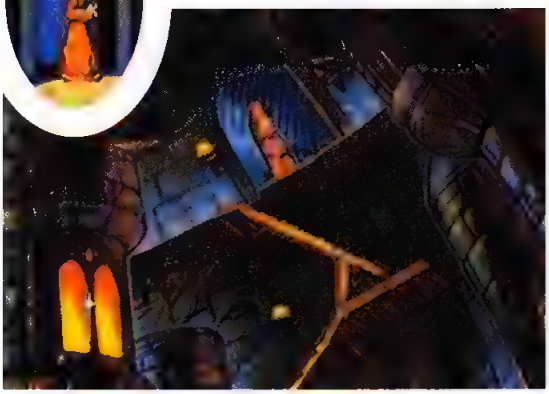
Graphics	8
Sound	4
Playability	7

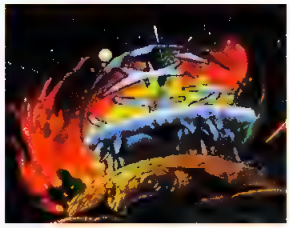
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

DISCWORLD









Our hero stands, confused, in the distance.

Cartoon graphics set the scene.

Since **Monkey island** made an enormous killing in the early '90s, game companies have taken great delight in ripping off the basic point-and-click interface for a huge number of similar games. **Discworld** is as big an offender as anything else, but at least marks a departure for PlayStation gaming..

"A nice change from fighting and shooting"

It's an adventure set on a world filled with wonder and delight, based on the successful series of novels by Terry Pratchett. If you liked **Hitchhiker's Guide** or even **Monty Python**, then the distinctly surreal British humor may tickle your funny bone. If not, you can at least enjoy the involving gameplay and beautiful graphics. All the characters talk and a couple of the voices are supplied by Monty Python stalwart Eric Idle. It's all very harmless and inoffensive. Perfect family fare.

Frank O'Connor

It's all about finding stuff.

One-Player Adventure
Memory card support
Full speech
Fully animated

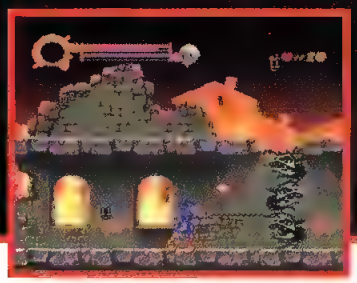
Psygnosis
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $60
Available: Now

Graphics	7
Sound	8
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

CASTLEVANIA: DRACULA X • KONAMI • SNES

That whip-wielding hero is back in action.



Don't bother attacking the ram; just run.

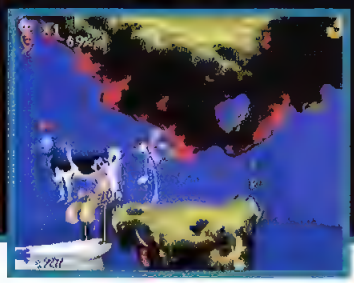
You play that vamp-hunting hero as he battles his way towards the granddaddy of them all: Dracula. Expect great gameplay and some cool graphics in this superior CASTLEVANIA sequel. That said, I think Konami should give it a break. This storyline is wearing a little thin. Or at least it would be, were it not for the fact that a PlayStation version is in the works. Now that would be very nice indeed.

Graphics	7
Sound	7
Playability	8

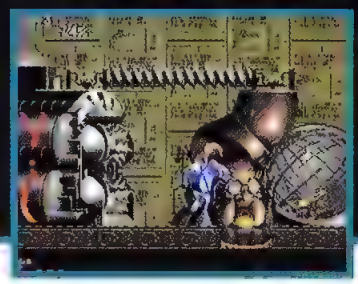
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

EARTHWORM JIM 2 • SHINY ENTERTAINMENT • GENESIS

The cow motif is bigger and better than ever.



The already stupendous graphics have been improved.



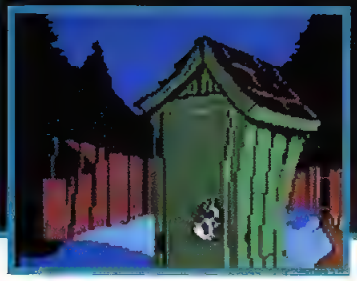
EARTHWORM JIM was kind of overshadowed last year by the unexpected and highly acclaimed release of DONKEY KONG COUNTRY. It was easily the best platform game available for Genesis, and the good news is that the sequel is even better. The boys at Shiny have done a sterling job in creating one of the funniest, most playable games ever to grace a television screen. This is as good as Genesis games will ever get.

Graphics	9
Sound	10
Playability	10

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **10**

SCOOBY DOO • ACCLAIM • GENESIS

What secrets lie in the dark heart of the outhouse?



Fun and games ensue in the kitchen, but no Scooby Snacks.

Scooby Doo needed a decent video game. A company called Elite released one for the Commodore 64 years ago, but it wasn't really up to much. This Genesis version owes a lot to games like MONKEY ISLAND and MANIAC MANSION. It's an icon driven comedy/adventure with all the Shaggy-related laffs you could ask for. A well-rounded, enjoyable adventure for young and old alike.

Graphics	8
Sound	6
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **9**

CIVILIZATION • KOEI • SNES

This little tart visits you in your sleep.

Expand you empire and develop your technology.

Koei games tend to annoy me. They're often tedious and not much to look at. Granted, they are impressive strategy simulators; they're just very hard to play for extended periods of time. Not CIVILIZATION. I was hooked. Start in the Stone Age and build an empire right through till the 21st century. Based on the popular PC game, CIVILIZATION will keep you engrossed for weeks and weeks.

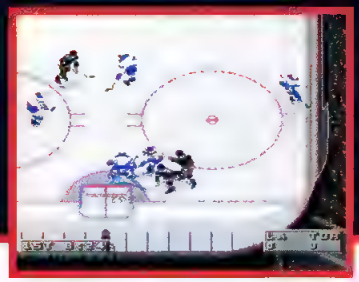
Graphics	6
Sound	4
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

NHL '96 • ELECTRONIC ARTS • SNES

One-timers aren't as easy to score with anymore.

The addition of a spin move is cool, but ultimately useless.



NHL '96 is here and you won't be disappointed. Cleaner graphics, the addition of speech and the reinstatement of fighting make this an instant classic. For SNES owners, you'll be glad to know that this version isn't as choppy and uninspired as its predecessors. But it still isn't as good as its counterpart on the Genesis. Who cares? Demi Moore isn't as hot as Stephanie Seymour, but I still wouldn't kick her outta bed.

Graphics	8
Sound	7
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

8

NHL '96 • ELECTRONIC ARTS • GENESIS

The sweet touch is still there.

FIGHT!

Fighting is BACK! Now you can punch him in the face or pull his shirt over his head, Canadian-style. This is just one of the awesome features in NHL '96. Expect the same great gameplay and cool extras as in NHL '95, but with better sound, graphics and the addition of a spin move so you can deck lone defensemen, '96 is super. Rush out and buy this game.

Graphics	8
Sound	8
Playability	9

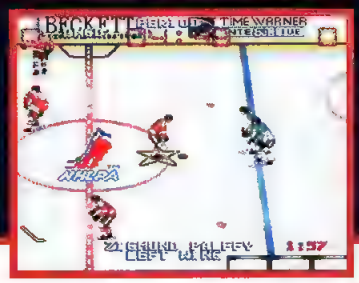
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

9

WAYNE GRETZKY AND THE NHL ALL-STARS • TIME WARNER • SNES

The Great One ain't so great anymore.

A scantly-clad Janet Jones would have helped this lackluster game.



Time Warner has to drop this stinker before it tries to multiply into sequels. GRETZKY ALL STARS is terrible. Bad graphics, bad sound and horrible playability make this as enjoyable as embalming a dead medieval leper. The side-to-side ice angle creates all sorts of problems, as do the choppy character animations. Much worse than we expected. I think I'll go find a dead medieval leper to embalm right now.

Graphics	5
Sound	4
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

4

KAWASAKI SUPERBIKE CHALLENGE • TIME WARNER • SNES

Customize your bike. Big deal.

If you can't make the wipeout look cool, don't even bother.

A first-person motorcycle racing game. Sounds cool, right? Well maybe if someone else had designed it. This game was so ridiculous that I thought that I must be looking at a Jaguar game. Nintendo has to remember that, as of now, they are practically obsolete, what with the Playstation and Saturn out there. A high level of quality must be maintained. Keep an eye on your third parties, Nintendo.

Graphics	6
Sound	5
Playability	3

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

3

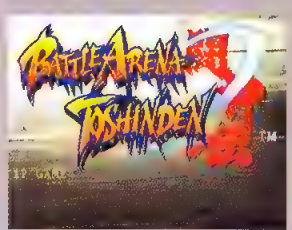
TACTICAL

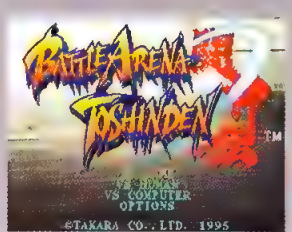
STRATEGIES ▾ CHEATS ▾ CODES

We here at **Ultimate Gamer** understand that even the best of players may have a bad day every now and then. Since we wouldn't want any unnecessary mass-murders taking place, we feel it's our duty to arm you with nothing but the very best tips and codes available. Depend on **Tactical** every month for an easy solution to your gaming problems.

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN SPECIAL

Developed by Takara, *Battle Arena Toshinden* is one of the greatest fighting games available for home systems, and it's also an excellent example of just how powerful the PlayStation is. There are some secrets in the game that you may have heard of, but you should also be aware that the cheats in the original Japanese version (*Toh Shin Den*) don't necessarily work on the American release from Sony. We've saved the first two pages of this month's *Tactical* to tell you all about the hidden stuff in both versions of the game. Listen, learn, read on....





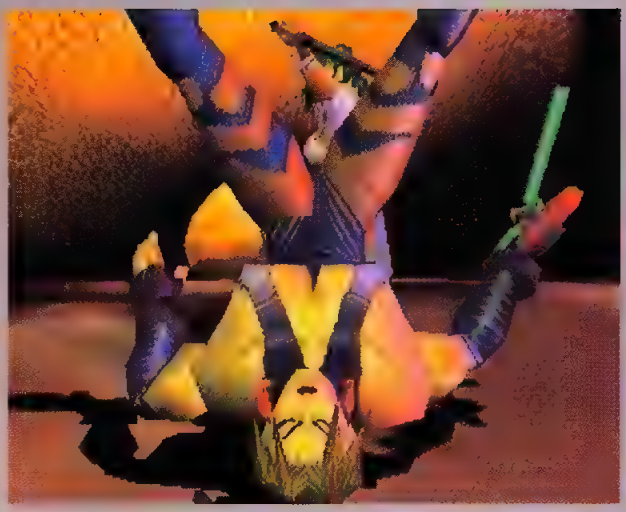
HOW TO PLAY AS GAIA

To play as Gaia, turn the game on and wait for the title screen to appear. While the words "1P GAME," "VS HUMAN," "VS COMPUTER" and "OPTIONS" are flying in from both sides of the screen, quickly press ↓↙←+□ before all of the text appears. (Note: In the Japanese version of the game, the correct motion is ↓↘→+□.) You'll hear the announcer yell, "Fight!" and the small text on the title screen will change from blue to pink. If you don't get it to register the first time, you must wait for the demo to begin or start a game and cancel to return to the title screen; the code will not work if you are returning to the title screen from the Options menu. Once the code is in, start a game. At the fighter-select screen, highlight Eiji, hold **Up** on the D-pad and press any action button. Now you're playing as Gaia, the game's first boss.

HOW TO PLAY AS SHO

To play as Sho you must first enter the Gaia code. Next, wait for the title screen to appear again as previously described. This time, while the words are flying into the screen, press →←→←+□ on Controller 2; you'll hear "Fight!" again and the text will change from pink to a greenish color. (Use →↓↘+□ instead for the Japanese version.) With that code in place, start a game. At the fighter-select screen, highlight Kayin, hold **Down** on the D-pad and press any action button. Now you're playing as Sho, the game's final boss.

To play as the alternate-color version of Gaia or Sho, just press **SELECT** before you hold the appropriate direction on the D-pad as described while choosing each character. Also, if you haven't already figured it out, both players can choose to play as Gaia or Sho once the proper codes are enabled.



HOW TO USE THE CAMERA CONTROLS

To get up close and personal with the polygons in *Toshinden*, try these camera-control tricks. First, visit the Options menu and set your Control Type to "H2." Now move down to the Camera Action setting; you'll find that there is a new camera angle option called "Your Self." Choose it, and you'll gain access to eight new Control Type settings—labeled A5 through H5—with "Camera X" and "Camera Y" functions assigned to the **L** and **R** buttons on top of the controller.

Now the fun starts. Choose one of the new Control Type settings and start a game. Note that the top buttons work as follows:

R1—Rotate clockwise
L1—Rotate counter-clockwise
R2—Tilt forward
L2—Tilt backward

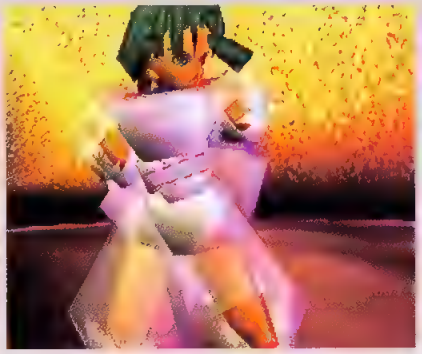
To access additional camera controls, press the **START** button to pause the game. While the "Pause" menu is on the screen, hold all four action buttons (**square**, **triangle**, **circle** and **X**) and press the **SELECT** button once to make the pause menu disappear; press it again to remove the energy bars. (Note: You can use this trick at any time, even if you're not messing with the camera angles. It's fun to fight with no energy bars; you never know who's winning until the round is over! To restore the Pause menu and energy bars, just pause the game, hold the four action buttons and press **SELECT** one more time.)

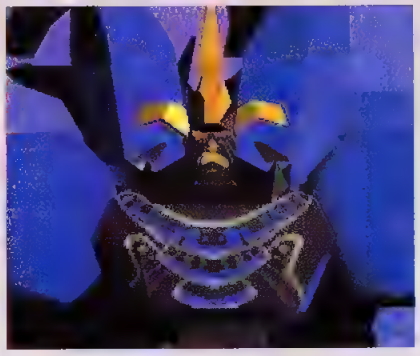
Anyway, while the game is still paused with the Pause menu and energy bars removed, the controller has six new secret functions as follows:

L1—Pan left
R1—Pan right
L2—Zoom in
R2—Zoom out
D-pad **Up**—Pan up
D-pad **Down**—Pan down

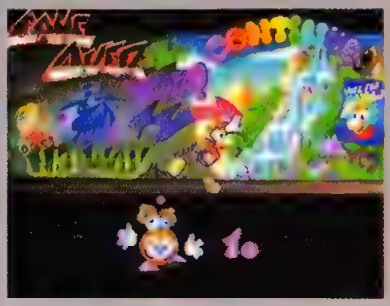
Pressing the **SELECT** button repeatedly on Controller 2 will allow you step through the character animation one "frame" at a time; holding it down will allow you to play the game in super slow-motion. Press **SELECT** on Controller 1 to toggle between the rotate/tilt camera controls and the pan/zoom controls.

One interesting side effect of this code is that the individual polygons that make up the characters' bodies will disappear if you zoom too close to them. Take advantage of this trick to see through parts of Ellis' clothing or get a good look at Gaia's face!





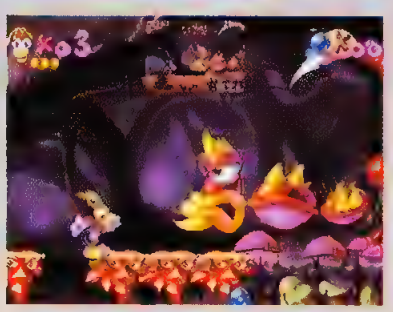
PLAYSTATION



RAYMAN

• *Infinite Continues*

If you're having trouble getting through *Rayman*...well, buy a memory card, for crying out loud! But seriously, here's a cheat that will help you out. When you lose your last life and the Game Over/Continue screen appears, press **Up**, **Down**, **Right**, **Left**. (Note: This only works if the number of continues remaining is three or less.) If you've done it correctly, you'll see your continue counter jump to 10. Repeat this code to reset the counter to 10 whenever you're running low on continues.



• *Picture-in-Picture*

Here's a weird code that Ubi Soft put into *Rayman* just to show off what the PlayStation is capable of. During the game, press **START** to pause, then hold the **R2** button down and press ○, ○, **Left**, ○, ○. A duplicate, moving image of the TV screen will appear in a window at the top of the normal screen. This code doesn't affect gameplay, it's just cool to look at. To remove the picture-in-picture window, just enter the code again.

3DO

GEX

• *Free Power-Ups*

Most of the power-up items in *Gex* can be activated on demand, whenever you need them. To use these cheats, just press the **P** button to pause the game, then hold the **R** button and enter the code.

Blue Firefly (ice balls): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **B**, **Left**, **Up**, **Right**, **B**, **A**, **Left**, **Left**, **Down**.

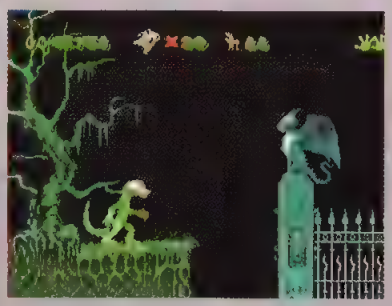
Red Firefly (fire balls): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Right**, **Right**, **Down**, **B**, **A**, **Left**, **Left**, **Down**.

Yellow Firefly (electricity): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Right**, **Right**, **Left**.

Grasshopper (jump higher): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Right**, **Up**, **B**, **B**, **Right**, **Right**.

Centipede (run faster): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Right**, **Up**, **Up**, **Up**, **Right**, **Right**.

Caterpillar (invincibility): Pause, hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Up**, **Up**, **C**, **Left**, **Right**, **Right**.



• *99 Lives*

It's not hard to earn lots of extra lives in *Gex*, but if you're really lazy, here's a super cheat that boosts your reserves. Press the **P** button to pause the game, then hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Down**, **Right**, **A**, **C**, **Up**, **Left**, **A**. Notice that your life counter has maxed out at 99.

• *Stage Select*

Here's the best *Gex* cheat of all; a full-blown stage select menu that allows you to warp to different stages and different areas of the map. You must be at a map screen for this trick to work. Here goes: At any map screen, press **P** to pause, then hold the **R** button and press **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **Right**, **Up**, **Right**, **Right**. The top-secret stage-select menu will appear. Be careful when using the menu, as some of the options may cause the 3DO to reboot. You may even find some unfinished stages that didn't make it into the final game. One of these is "Secret 1"; check out the springy couches!

Note: You may find it easier to remember these cheats if you're aware that each code spells a word with the controller buttons. In addition to **A**, **B** and **C**, think of the directions on the D-pad as letters: U, D, L and R (for Up/Down/Left/Right) and N, S, E and W (for North/South/East/West.) The stage-select code above actually spells out "LCD WEENEE"; that is, Left, C, Down, West, East, East, North, East, East (or **Left**, **C**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **Right**, **Up**, **Right**, **Right**.) The other codes can be much more easily remembered as follows:

LCD BLUEBALLS
LCD REDBALLS
LCD EEL
LCD RUBBER
LCD RUNNER
LCD NUCLEAR
LCD DRACULA

REBEL ASSAULT

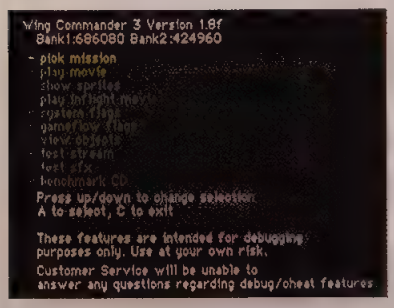
• *Stage Skip*

To warp your way through the stages of *Rebel Assault* with ease, start the game and wait for the LucasArts logo to spin onto the screen. As soon as it starts to appear, press **Up+A**, **Down+A**, **Left**, **A**, **Right+A**; repeat this code until you hear a bell ring and a chorus of voices singing, "LucasArts!" With this cheat in place, start the game. When you want to skip any stage, just press the **C** button to be warped instantly to the next one.

SYNDICATE

• *Cheat Password*

Start the game and choose "Configure Company" from the main menu. Select the "Company Name" option and enter "NGOR MAT" as the name of your company (with a space between the "R" and the "M".) Now choose "Begin Mission;" you'll find that every location on the map is available for you to play. You'll also have tons of extra money to buy as many agents and weapons as you want.



WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER

• *Cheat Menu*

To access the cheat menu in the 3DO version of *WC III*, you need to reach the "New Game/Load Game/Continue" menu screen. (This screen will appear automatically if you have a saved game in memory; if you can't get there, the easiest thing to do is to fly the first mission and get killed. The "Continue" menu will appear after the "Funeral.") At the "Continue" menu, press and hold the **L** button, then press and hold the **P** button; you'll see the cursor cycling through the available options. Continue to hold those buttons down and press **A** while the word "Continue" is highlighted; you'll get a debug menu with tons of options. Some of them simply don't work ("Gameflow Flags," "Test Stream" and "Test SFX") and others will prevent you from returning to the game without restarting the machine (the words "**C** to exit" will disappear from the main menu.) "Pick Mission" allows you to play any mission, "Play Movie" and "Play Inflight Movie" allow you to watch the game's FMV scenes and "Show Sprites" and "View Objects" let you see the items and backgrounds. Better yet: Pick a tough stage and start the game. During the mission, hold **L** and press **P** to return to the debug menu. Choose "System Flags" and change the first two options to "False." Now you can't be killed, you can't crash into any other ships and when your weapons are locked on to an enemy, hold **X** and press **A** to instantly kill them with the "Finger of Death!"

VIRTUAL BOY

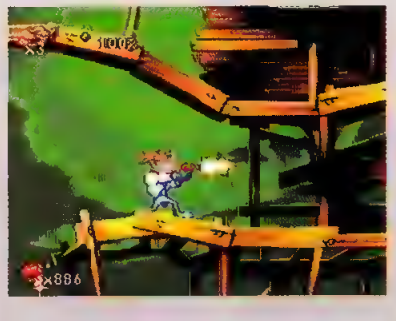
RED ALARM

• *Hidden Items*

If you see your weapons "lock on" to a wall or obstacle when there are no enemies in the area, chances are you've found one of the game's hidden bonus items—just shoot at the spot where your weapons have locked and they will appear. Called the "Bowwow Bonus" and "Mirow Bonus," they look like a dog's face and cat's face, respectively. Look for them in every stage; they're worth 5,000 points each.

There are lots of other hidden secrets in *Red Alarm*. Try flying through the first few tunnels in Stage 2, then return to the beginning of the stage; you'll find a family of scavenging dinosaurs. Don't shoot the mother! Other invisible items won't appear until you shoot them; unlike the dog and cat bonuses, your weapons won't lock on to these mysterious items. Can you find the hidden Nintendo hardware in the first stage?

SEGA CD



EARTHWORM JIM SPECIAL EDITION

• *Shiny's Revenge*

Why did *Earthworm Jim* fail to become the best-selling, most popular title in the history of video games? No reflection on the game's quality, that's for sure. No, the real reason is because good old Nintendo decided to release the blockbuster *Donkey Kong Country* at the same time as *Jim* hit the shelves. Developer Shiny Entertainment knows this, and that's why there's a special code in the Sega CD version of *Jim* that gives your character the head of Donkey Kong...with an arrow through it! To see this bitter commentary on the fickleness of the game-buying audience, just press **START** to pause, then press **Down+C**, **B**, **A**, **A**, **A**, **A**, **B**, **C** and unpause.

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FLASHBACK

Every month, we step into the Ultimate Gamer Time Machine and relive those early days of gaming. This month, we examine a very unique stand-alone game machine: Vectrex.

Gaming Alternatives

In the early days of gaming, all coin-op videogame graphics could be broken down into two categories: Rasterscan and vector. Rasterscan graphics are based on combining individual pixels in order to build on-screen images and are the standard for televisions sets all over the world. Vector graphics on the other hand, strictly involve the manipulation of straight luminous lines, and were widely used in many popular arcade games; games like **Asteroids**, **Tempest** and **BattleZone** to name a few. The only real advantage of games using vector graphics is fluidity of movement. Graphic elements such as a spaceship, for example, move across the screen with the smoothness of melted butter. The disadvantages of vector-based games include lack of graphic detail and limited color palette. In the end, there was only so much a programmer could do to make the games visually stimulating.

The Vectrex Arcade System was a very unique piece of hardware. To this day, it is the only stand-alone vector graphics game machine ever manufactured for the home. West Coast-based General Consumer Electronics (GCE) introduced the system to gamers in 1982. To much delight, it was now possible—in the privacy of your own home—to play the kinds of games only previously seen in the arcades. The self-contained Vectrex unit had a built-in black-and-white monitor, single audio speaker and one flip-forward control panel. The pack-in game, in a manner of speaking, was **Mine Storm**, which was actually the system's built-in, default game. Without a cartridge inserted into the Vectrex unit, Mine Storm would become active once the power knob was switched on.

GCE sold Vectrex to Milton Bradley two years after its debut in 1982.

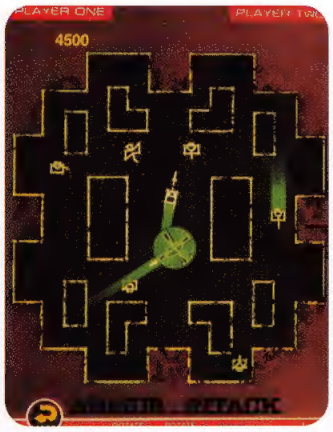
To make up for the total lack of color graphics, GCE came up with the idea of supplying individual colored overlays with each game cart. This was an admirable approach, but the visual improvements could only be taken so far. The 10" plastic overlays really added only a couple of colors. The overlay for a game (like **Berzerk**, for example) was tinted blue, and as a result, no matter what location the on-screen characters were, they always appeared blue in color. Needless to say, this got old real quick, even back in Stone-age 1982.

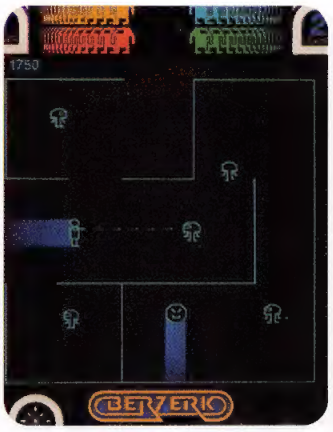
The Vectrex controllers were one of the system's best attributes; they were well-designed and very functional. The flip-forward panel consisted of one joystick (it's more like a "joy-knob") and four fire buttons. Depending on which game you were playing, the button functions varied. GCE added a nice touch to their overlays: Each overlay indicated all of the control panel functions (such as thrust, fire, rotate, etc) for that particular game. Even when you were finished playing, the controllers worked exactly as promised: They could be snapped into the bottom of the unit for storage.

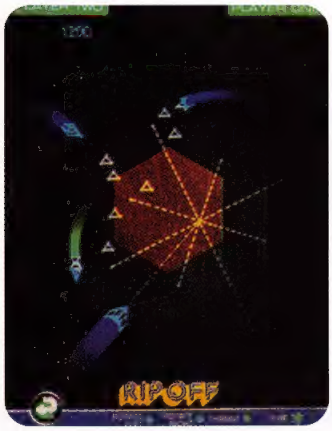
The Vectrex game library contained some very popular titles. Coin-op conversions of vector-based games were almost always done complete justice. **Rip Off**, **Space Wars**, **Armor Attack** and **Star Castle** were finally available for play as they were originally intended: Vector graphics-style. In 1983, a game called **Spike** was released and was recognized as being the first home console game to contain speech. Unfortunately, the resulting effect sounded more like bursts of garbled static than the actual human voice. The game itself was fun, but hearing "Eek! Help! Spike! Oh, no! Molly!" could be tolerated for about 30 seconds. After that, one's sanity was in danger of being irreparably damaged. In all, a total of 28 Vectrex games were released.

There were some truly innovative accessories available for the system during the course of its run. In 1983, GCE offered the 3-D Imager, which was basically a set of gog-

Game collector Jerry Jone's' rather extensive Vectrex collection (we're jealous).







gles used to simulate three-dimensional gameplay in conjunction with special 3-D software. Only two 3-D games were ever released: **3-D Crazy Coaster** and **3-D Narrow Escape**. The Vectrex Light Pen was an interesting piece of equipment; it allowed the user to draw brightly-lit images directly onto the face of the Vectrex monitor. **AnimAction** was a program which enabled wannabe artists to create simple frame-by-frame animation routines. GCE is to be commended for their efforts in bringing unique video game products to market.

The Vectrex, like every other console, fell victim to the evil crash of '84. By the end of 1985, complete systems were reported to be selling for around 50 bucks—brand-new and factory-sealed, at that. Yes, Vectrex had garnered a considerable following, but as fate would have it, it ran out of gas before it could reach its full potential. For the short period of time it was on store shelves though, GCE did a tremendous job providing gamers with a great source for vector coin-op action.

—Jim Loftus

S Y S T E M S P E C S

SYSTEM:	**Vectrex**
MANUFACTURER:	**GCE**
RELEASE DATE:	**1982**
PRICE:	**$199.95**
SPECIFICATIONS:	**8-bit Motorola processor running at 1.6 Mhz, 64K ROM, black & white monitor**
ACCESSORIES:	**3-D Imager, Light Pen**

The family in this old Vectrex advertisement currently owns four Virtual Boys.

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